

# *Irish Writing*

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Edited by

**DAVID MARCUS**

and

**TERENCE SMITH**

NUMBER SIXTEEN

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Edited by

DAVID MARCUS and TERENCE SMITH

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## SEAMUS de FAOITE

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### LAW ABIDING

THE two policemen were big, with the fat of their sixties added to the bone and body of their prime, but as they approached the smallest pub in the village they looked enormous. The heat of the day had put a dew of sweat from brows to double-chins. When they butted under the white horse figure in the fanlight it seemed as if they would rob the flagged and shadowed place of a coolness that bottles gave the deep green of a trout pool.

The owner of the pub was asleep on his palms, braced by an elbow on either side of an open ledger. A fly winging about the ripe tip of his nose was upset in each act of alighting by a whistle of breath like mild surprise. His specs, halfway up the furrows of his forehead, were secured to his bald head by a piece of twine. The policeman with the round parcel in brown paper hit the counter with it, but the wizened sleeper slept on.

The two big men stood over him for a moment without comment. Then, drilled by long custom, without knowing, they followed a slow ritual in perfect accord. Brows and cap-bands were wiped with handkerchiefs out of pants pockets, caps were placed at the sleeper's elbows, bar stools were drawn up to the old face as if the pouted lips were about to utter something extremely confidential. One of the policemen stooped to look into the wry expression.

"If 'tis dreaming he is, Dowd, the dreams are not nice," he told the other.

"Ah, with a man of his years even sleep without dreams do turn sour, Mac," said Dowd.

"Give us two, Darcy," said Mac, but old Darcy went on whistling at the persistent fly.

"If you don't make a move, Darcy," said Dowd into the ear near him, "we'll fill 'em ourselves."

"Darcy, we'll make away with your money," Mac confided to the other ear, and Darcy collapsed out of sleep onto the counter.

"What is it, what is it, what is it?" he gasped. "What, what, what," he exclaimed with petulance, and "what now!" until the specs fell into place on his nose. Then, "Good day, men," he greeted, as if nothing unusual had happened at all.

"Two, Darcy," said Mac, but Darcy was already reaching for two pint glasses off the zinc draining board.

He raised the glasses between him and the window to make sure they were clear enough to catch the lime leaves in the yard without misting their freshness. While he filled the pints the two policemen made themselves comfortable. Dowd undid the



belt and collar of his tunic and the neckband of the striped woollen shirt. His ruddy good-natured face was frosted on the loose jowls with stubble. Mac was satisfied with loosening the laces on boots that had a little half-moon of upper missing over each small toe. His mop of hair had aged from red to rust and his freckles were like the blotches on a blackbird's eggs. But his grey collie's eyes were lively and roving constantly. They lighted now on a calendar that showed a sheening cob bearing a foxy barefoot boy over a pad of date tags.

"Ah, Darcy," he complained.

"Yes, yes, yes," grunted Darcy.

"Tis easy known I was away four days."

"How, now?"

"The calendar is four days behind time," Mac said.

As he walked to the calendar with his loose boots and his mop on end he might be just up out of bed. A yawn added to the likeness.

"One, two, three, four," he counted, tearing the dead numbers off the pad. "Now, Darcy, that brings us up to date."

Darcy put the two pints on the counter into two pools of their own froth.

"If so small a thing brings us up to date, a smaller should put us ahead of time," he said. "Take off one more."

"An up to date village is one thing, Darcy," Dowd put in. "A village ahead of time would be a place of pilgrimage, however, and we want your good porter, Darcy, for ourselves."

"Maybe that explains why ye're so strict on my after-hours trade," Darcy countered.

"Now, Darcy, fair is fair. We didn't raid you so often that there was ever an endorsement on your licence. Would you, as a mere matter of interest, care to be told how many men you let in after Mass on Sunday?"

"I wouldn't, I wouldn't, I wouldn't," growled Darcy. "But would you care to hear how much I have paid out in fines on the head of ye're summonses?"

"The sum didn't stop you from paying the way of two sons to be priests, a son for a vet and a son with a bar business in Dublin that wouldn't own this hole in the wall as a cellar for bottles," Mac butted in.

He raised his drink, scraped the tip off the base of the glass on the edge of the counter, blew a shape for his lips in the high cap of froth, fitted his lip with care into the shape and allowed his shock head to tilt gradually back in the first long draught.

"Here's luck," he said, out of a wet mouth over the rim of the glass.

"The best," wished Dowd, raising his pint with an odd kind of crude grace to the toast.

"God bless the pair of ye," prayed Darcy.

Then for a matter of minutes the two policemen loitered with

their liquor, content out of the hot day as plough horses at a stone trough.

"Two more, Darcy," said Dowd, at length. "That was a master pint. Like new milk. May God never give me more mind for it than I have now."

"Amen, amen, amen," prayed Darcy, distaste for the thought hanging in every loop line of his sour old face.

"To hell with you, Darcy, you ould hypocrite," laughed Dowd.

"Amen to that too," said Darcy. "Your business in Dublin went off all right, Guard Mac?" he added, from a milker's squat at the barrels. "Our poor neighbour was taken where the weight of his cross will be lightened for him?"

"He was in Grangegorman asylum a half hour after we sighted the Liffey," Mac answered.

"Mac was at Green Street courthouse for the murder trial of the tramp tinsmith, Darcy," Dowd put in.

Darcy put Dowd's drink on the counter and looked at Mac over the specs.

"What did the young man on trial look like?" he asked.

"A good figure of a man and well-featured," Mac admitted.

"A man too young to die, who must die."

"He wouldn't have to die, if there every was such a thing as an intelligent jury," said Dowd.

"Are you serious?" Mac asked him, his very voice suggesting the curve of the question mark.

"Why not?" Dowd gave back, his new pint snuggled in the crotch of his elbow.

"Only that it don't sound like you," said Mac. "A man of your years, and your experience and your understanding to make so unthinking a statement as that."

"It wasn't unthinking," Dowd said, snuggling the pint still, caressing it with his big paw as if it were a pup. "Sure I'm always thinking. With nothing but your ould boots for company in years of solitary watch as a keeper of the law, sure you'd go as mad as the creature you took to Grangegorman if you didn't keep the mind occupied with thought. It was long thinking brought me to the opinion that the jury system is no use because juries, without exception, have less legal intelligence than the old brogues that I talk to on my beat."

"I'll have another free trip to Dublin shortly," said Mac.

"Your pint, Guard Mac," Darcy got in, putting the glass into the imprint of the last.

"Explain yourself, Dowd, about the jury system," Mac challenged, sparks of temper in his lively eyes.

"Take the case of the journeyman tinsmith," Dowd said. "There was no witness to say what happened between that lad and the ould fellah that's dead now from a belt of a mallet on the forehead."

"There's plenty to say they saw him with a mallet in his fist



over the prostrate body of the victim."

"With one rap of a mallet the prostrate body wouldn't be prostrate at all if the victim was forty-eight instead of eighty."

"Even at a hundred and eighty we have the same right to life as a lad of eighteen."

"But if he travels the woods under the first star, grabbing money out of people's hands, he have to suffer the strength of their objection."

"The victim stated in death-bed evidence that it was he who was counting the shillings by the holly bush when the lad attacked him," Mac cried, venting his venom in a savage attack on his drink.

Dowd raised his glass with due respect.

"The lad who travelled the roads of Ireland was a journeyman tinsmith, don't forget. The mallet was a necessary tool of his trade. The shillings he said were hard earned putting bottoms on old pans and making new ponnies for the neighbourhood. He wouldn't have hit so hard, he said, but that 'tis a man's bulk and not his age you notice as a first impression when dusk is in a wood and last light in a sky beyond tree-tops. As a man who had to act quick in dusk and dark I agree with him. And so should you, Mac."

"A man of years who knows he has only minutes before he goes before his God is not likely to tell lies," Mac cried.

"A man of years who gets a belt of a mallet on the head could say a questionable thing to God Himself," Dowd almost whispered to the top of his pint. His voice strengthened when he added: "And the ignorant members of the jury are unlikely to take that into account. That one tap of the mallet too many will probably lead to a condemned cell and the long drop in Mountjoy for that young lad."

Darcy was so interested in the argument that he forgot to have an eye for the Sergeant on behalf of the two dishevelled policemen. He moved now along the counter to look through the open doorway. It seemed as if the parched stone road was drinking from the light-flecked pools of shadow under the lime trees and the hot air thirsted for the sound of the river. Downhill towards the bridge a caravan rocked after the light-shod hooves of a cob. Midway between the bright red wheels a piebald terrier bobbed along on three legs. At a window in the round green gable of the hood a young woman with jet hair was talking to a young man with a crop in his armpit who walked after. The ivory of the woman's teeth and the gold of her ear-rings had a perfect setting in the chestnut darkness of her skin. Apart from these there was no one on the road down to the bridge, and no one at all showed where the road beyond rose in a leap to a bluebelled hilltop.

"Did you ever summon a jury?" Mac shot at Dowd as Darcy shuffled back.



"I did. I did four years in Store Street Station in Dublin before I was sent to the foreign missions of the Force, where a man's wife is his Chief Superintendent and the barmen are all like Darcy."

"Your wife is a fine woman, a fine woman," said Darcy, raising his palms to the ceiling and nodding a wry thanks to God for the nature of Dowd's wife.

"What did you think of the jurymen you summoned?" Mac pursued.

"Cute enough, clever enough, cagey enough in their own business, but ignorant men inside the door of a courthouse, especially in the ins and outs of human frailty that are brought into play to make a capital charge."

On the last word Dowd's tunic belt was buckled far out on his paunch, the collar was fastened, and his glass was ready for the rite of the three last swallows.

"Law is more than law," he added. "'Tis justice too, and justice would be better administered by trained lawmen who had to bear the full brunt of their own findings in any case that carried their name. As it is they can blame any miscarriage of justice on the stupidity of the jury that use the lawmen's brains in place of using a bit of their own."

Mac was re-tying his laces while Dowd spoke. He was made so angry by what he heard that he broke a lace. That made him even more angry. On Dowd's final word he rounded on him with a tirade.

"Mother of God, man, do you not see that the jury system is a legal institution framed by trial and error over years upon years to down the criminal while giving the criminal every chance?"

"Criminal is a broad term that has a lot of room for the lights and shades that no juryman has the wit to fathom," Dowd said amiably.

"Ninety nine criminal cases out of a hundred carry a guilty man in the box. For one innocent man that would benefit by doing away with the jury system ninety-nine criminals would roam the world at large to prey upon innocent people. If we argued a thousand cases from our own side of the fence, the two of us, you'd probably be right in one, and I'd be right in the rest."

Mac coughed down the last of his drink, and before Dowd could answer, he had his brown paper parcel like a baton under his arm and was making for the doorway. Dowd emptied his glass in three slow swallows and savoured the dregs on pleased lips. Mac turned at the doorway.

"On that level of law you're dealing with criminals, remember," he said. "Criminals! and you speak of them as if they were plaster saints that an ill-wind only shook on the pedestals. Criminals, they are, the most of them, and the most of the most were criminals in undetected cases many times before the once they were caught. Criminals!" he cried and struck the door with his

huge fist. He narrowed his eyes to look for the set of the relentless sun in the bluebell blue of the sky. "And on top of it all 'tis all hours of the day and the wife will kill me," he added.

"Ah well, you would appear to have your excuse under your oter," Dowd said, tapping the baton-shaped parcel.

Mac smiled. "I might have at that," he said. "Dammit I might at that," he said, as if he were easing in to awareness of possibilities.

He chuckled. The weight of previous thought was shed for the pleasure of the new. He came back two steps to meet Dowd inside the door. He tore a portion of the paper off the contents.

"Do you see what it is, Dowd? A roll of flyscreen. Zinc with very small holes in it. You'd see it in old pub snugs and confession boxes in old churches—and where else. Come now, Dowd, where else would you see it?"

"In a stone-breaker's goggles," said Dowd. "If there's a stone-breaker left in the world."

"Good," Mac replied. "But you'd see it too in a kitchen safe you'd have standing on stilts in the yard. We have a little girl from the next village for skivvy below at the house. She's a nice little one and a good worker but she have one fault. She's light-fingered. Hardly anything not nailed down or under lock and key but will walk. All in the house is sealed down by the missus from her. But in one side of the safe in the yard there's a hole, and the eggs and things are goin' through that hole at a rate would set up a small business. So I'm putting a sound piece of wire on that side after dinner, and the missus have a key for the door, and the eggs and such will be out of the way of the creature's temptation."

"That's a prime idea," said Dowd.

"Good luck, Darcy," Mac called.

"Good luck," said Dowd.

"Safe home, men," said Darcy.

As the two big men left the cave and pool cut and coolness of the flagged and shadowed pub, and strode down the parched stone road towards the bridge, Darcy's old face twitched and trembled all the way to what passed for a smile among those who knew he meant it for a smile.

"Well, well, well," he whispered. "Well, well, well."

He straddled the ledger with his elbows. In fitting his wrinkled wedge of face into his palms his finger-tips pushed his specs far up on his forehead. The sleep came back, and the fly came back as if in answer to the very first whistle.



# LIAM O'FLAHERTY

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## THE TENT

A SUDDEN squall struck the tent. White glittering hailstones struck the shabby canvas with a wild noise. The tent shook and swayed slightly forward, dangling its tattered flaps. The pole creaked as it strained. A rent appeared near the top of the pole like a silver seam in the canvas. Water immediately trickled through the seam, making a dark blob.

A tinker and his two wives were sitting on a heap of straw in the tent, looking out through the entrance at the wild moor that stretched in front of it, with a snowcapped mountain peak rising like the tip of a cone over the ridge of the moor about two miles away. The three of them were smoking cigarettes in silence.

It was evening, and they had pitched their tent for the night in a gravel pit on the side of the mountain road, crossing from one glen to another. Their donkey was tethered to the cart beside the tent.

When the squall came the tinker sat up with a start and looked at the pole. He stared at the seam in the canvas for several moments and then he nudged the two women and pointed upwards with a jerk of his nose. The women looked, but nobody spoke. After a minute or so the tinker sighed and struggled to his feet.

"I'll throw a few sacks over the top," he said.

He picked up two brown sacks from the heap of blankets and clothes that were drying beside the brazier in the entrance and went out. The women never spoke, but kept on smoking.

The tinker kicked the donkey out of his way. The beast had stuck his hind quarters into the entrance of the tent as far as possible, in order to get the heat from the wood burning in the brazier. The donkey shrank away sideways, still chewing a wisp of the hay which the tinker had stolen from a haggard the other side of the mountain. The tinker scrambled up the bank against which the tent was pitched. The bank was covered with rank grass into which yesterday's snow had melted in muddy cakes.

The top of the tent was only about eighteen inches above the bank. Beyond the bank there was a narrow rough road, with a thick copse of pine trees on the far side, within the wired fence of a demesne, but the force of the squall was so great that it swept through the trees and struck the top of the tent as violently as if it were standing exposed on the open moor. The tinker had to lean against the wind to prevent himself being carried away. He looked into the wind with wide-open nostrils.

"It can't last," he said, throwing the two sacks over the tent, where there was a rent in the canvas. He then took a big needle from his jacket and put a few stitches in them.

He was about to jump down from the bank when somebody

hailed him from the road. He looked up and saw a man approaching, with his head thrust forward against the wind. The tinker scowled and shrugged his shoulders. He waited until the man came up to him.

The stranger was a tall, sturdily built man, with a long face and firm jaws and great sombre dark eyes, a fighter's face. When he reached the tinker he stood erect with his feet together and his hands by his sides like a soldier. He was fairly well dressed, his face was clean and well shaved, and his hands were clean. There was a blue figure of something or other tattooed on the back of his right hand. He looked at the tinker frankly with his sombre dark eyes. Neither spoke for several moments.

"Good evening," the stranger said.

The tinker nodded without speaking.

He was looking the stranger up and down, as if he were slightly afraid of this big, sturdy man, who was almost like a policeman or a soldier or somebody in authority. He looked at the man's boots especially. In spite of the muck of the roads, the melted snow and the hailstones, they were still fairly clean, and looked as if they were constantly polished.

"Travellin'?" he said at length.

"Eh," said the stranger, almost aggressively. "Oh! Yes, I'm lookin' for somewhere to shelter for the night."

The stranger glanced at the tent slowly and then looked back to the tinker again.

"Goin' far?" said the tinker.

"Don't know," said the stranger angrily. Then he almost shouted: "I have no ruddy place to go to . . . only the ruddy roads."

"All right, brother," said the tinker, "come on."

He nodded towards the tent and jumped down into the pit. The stranger followed him, stepping carefully down to avoid soiling his clothes.

When he entered the tent after the tinker and saw the women, he immediately took off his cap and said: "Good evening." The two women took their cigarettes from their mouths, smiled and nodded their heads.

The stranger looked about him cautiously and then sat down on a box to the side of the door near the brazier. He put his hands to the blaze and rubbed them. Almost immediately a slight steam rose from his clothes. The tinker handed him a cigarette, murmuring: "Smoke?"

The stranger accepted the cigarette, lit it, and then looked at them. None of them were looking at him, so he "sized them up" carefully, looking at each suspiciously with his sombre dark eyes.

The tinker was sitting on a box opposite him, leaning languidly backwards from his hips, a slim, tall, graceful man, with a beautiful head poised gracefully on a brown neck, and great black lashes falling down over his half-closed eyes, just like a woman. A



womanish-looking fellow, with that sensuous grace in the languid pose of his body which is found only among aristocrats and people who belong to a very small workless class, cut off from the mass of society, yet living at their expense. A young fellow with proud, contemptuous, closed lips and an arrogant expression in his slightly expanded nostrils. A silent fellow, blowing out cigarette smoke through his nostrils and gazing dreamily into the blaze of the wood fire.

The two women were just like him in texture, both of them slatterns, dirty and unkempt, but with the same proud, arrogant, contemptuous look in their beautiful brown faces. One was dark-haired and black-eyed. She had a hard expression in her face and seemed very alert. The other woman was golden-haired, with a very small head and finely-developed jaw, that stuck out level with her forehead. She was surpassingly beautiful, in spite of her ragged clothes and the foul condition of her hair, which was piled on her tiny skull in knotted heaps, uncombed. The perfect symmetry and delicacy of her limbs, her bust and her long throat that had tiny freckles in the white skin, made the stranger feel afraid of her, of her beauty and her presence in the tent.

"Tinkers," he said to himself. "Awful people, curse them."

Then he turned to the tinker.

"Got any grub in the place . . . eh . . . mate?" he said brusquely, his thick lips rapping out every word firmly, like one accustomed to command inferiors. He hesitated before he added the word "mate," obviously disinclined to put himself on a level of human intercourse with the tinker.

The tinker nodded and turned to the dark-haired woman.

"Might as well have supper now, Kitty," he said softly.

The dark-haired woman rose immediately, and taking a blackened can that was full of water, she put it on the brazier. The stranger watched her. Then he addressed the tinker again.

"This is a hell of a way to be, eh?" he said. "Stuck out on a mountain. Thought I'd make Roundwood tonight. How many miles is it from here?"

"Ten," said the tinker.

"Good God!" said the stranger.

Then he laughed, and putting his hand in his breast pocket, he pulled out a half-pint bottle of whisky.

"This is all I got left," he said, looking at the bottle.

The tinker immediately opened his eyes wide when he saw the bottle. The golden-haired woman sat up and looked at the stranger eagerly, opening her brown eyes wide and rolling her tongue in her cheek. The dark-haired woman, rummaging in a box, also turned around to look. The stranger winked an eye and smiled.

"Always welcome," he said. "Eh? My curse on it, anyway. Anybody got a cockscrew?"

The tinker took a knife from his pocket, pulled out a cork-

screw from its side and handed it to the man. The man opened the bottle.

"Here," he said, handing the bottle to the tinker. "Pass it round. I suppose the women'll have a drop."

The tinker took the bottle and whispered to the dark-haired woman. She began to pass him mugs from the box.

"Funny thing," said the stranger, "when a man is broke and hungry, he can get whisky, but he can't get grub. Met a man this morning in Dublin and he knew I was broke all right, but instead of asking me to have a meal, or giving me some money, he gave me that. I had it with me all along the road and I never opened it."

He threw the end of his cigarette out of the entrance.

"Been drinkin' for three weeks, curse it," he said.

"Are ye belongin' to these parts?" murmured the tinker, pouring out the whisky into the tin mugs.

"What's that?" said the man, again speaking angrily, as if he resented the question. Then he added: "No. Never been here in me life before. Question of goin' into the workhouse or takin' to the roads. Got a job in Dublin yesterday. The men downed tools when they found I wasn't a member of the union. Thanks. Here's luck."

"Good health, sir," the women said.

The tinker nodded his head only, as he put his own mug to his lips and tasted it. The stranger drained his at a gulp.

"Ha," he said. "Drink up, girls. It's good stuff."

He winked at them. They smiled and sipped their whisky.

"My name is Carney," said the stranger to the tinker. "What do they call you?"

"Byrne," said the tinker. "Tim Byrne."

"H'm! Byrne," said Carney. "Wicklow's full o' Byrnes. Tinker, I suppose?"

"Yes," murmured the tinker, blowing a cloud of cigarette smoke through his puckered lips. Carney shrugged his shoulders.

"Might as well," he said. "One thing is as good as another. Look at me. Sergeant-major in the army two months ago. Now I'm tramping the roads. That's boiling."

The dark-haired woman took the can off the fire. The other woman tossed off the remains of her whisky and got to her feet to help with the meal.

Carney shifted his box back farther out of the way and watched the golden-haired woman eagerly. When she moved about her figure was so tall that she had to stoop low in order to avoid the roof of the tent. She must have been six feet in height, and she wore high-heeled shoes which made her look taller.

"There is a woman for ye," thought Carney. "Must be a gentleman's daughter. Lots o' these shots out of a gun in the county Wicklow. Half the population is illegitimate. Awful people, these tinkers. I suppose the two of them belong to this



Tim. More like a woman than a man. Suppose he never did a stroke of work in his life."

There was cold rabbit for supper, with tea and bread and butter. It was excellent tea, and it tasted all the sweeter on account of the storm outside which was still raging. Sitting around the brazier they could see the hailstones driving through a grey mist, sweeping the bleak black moor, and the cone-shaped peak of the mountain in the distance, with a whirling cloud of snow around it. The sky was rent here and there with a blue patch, showing through the blackness.

They ate the meal in silence. Then the women cleared it away. They didn't wash the mugs or plates, but put everything away, probably until morning. They sat down again after drawing out the straw, bed-shape, and putting the clothes on it that had been drying near the brazier.

They all seemed to be in good humour now with the whisky and the food. Even the tinker's face had grown soft, and he kept puckering up his lips in a smile. He passed round cigarettes.

"Might as well finish that bottle," said Carney. "Bother the mugs. We can drink outa the neck."

"Tastes sweeter that way," said the golden-haired woman, laughing thickly, as if she were slightly drunk. At the same time she looked at Carney with her lips open.

Carney winked at her. The tinker noticed the wink and the girl's smile.

His face clouded and he closed his lips very tightly. Carney took a deep draught and passed him the bottle. The tinker nodded his head, took the bottle and put it to his lips.

"I'll have a stretch," said Carney. "I'm done in. Twenty miles since morning. Eh?"

He threw himself down on the clothes beside the yellow-haired woman. She smiled and looked at the tinker. The tinker paused with the bottle to his lips and looked at her through almost closed eyes savagely. He took the bottle from his lips and bared his white teeth. The golden-haired woman laughed aloud, stretched back one arm under her head and the other stretched out towards the tinker.

"Sht," she whistled through her teeth. "Pass it along, Tim."

He handed her the bottle slowly, and as he gave it to her she clutched his hand and tried to pull him to her. But he tore his hand away, got up and walked out of the tent rapidly.

Carney had noticed nothing of this. He was lying close to the woman by his side. He could feel the softness of her beautiful body and the slight undulation of her soft side as she breathed. He became overpowered with desire for her and closed his eyes, as if to shut out the consciousness of the world and of the other people in the tent. Reaching down he seized her hand and pressed it.

She answered the pressure. At the same time she turned to her companion and whispered:

"Where's he gone?"

"I dunno. Out."

"What for?"

"Phst."

"Give us a drop."

"Here ye are."

Carney heard the whispering, but he took no notice of it. He heard the golden-haired one drinking and then drawing a deep breath.

"Finished," she said, throwing the bottle to the floor. Then she laughed softly.

"I'm going out to see where he's gone," whispered the dark-haired one. She rose and passed out of the tent. Carney immediately turned around and tried to embrace the woman by his side. But she bared her teeth in a savage grin and pinioned his arms with a single movement.

"Didn't think I was strong," she said, putting her face close to his and grinning at him.

He looked at her seriously, surprised and still more excited

"What ye going to do in Roundwood?" she said.

"Lookin' for a job," he muttered thickly.

She smiled and rolled her tongue in her cheek.

"Stay here," she said.

He licked his lip and winked his right eye. "With you?"

She nodded.

"What about him?" he said, nodding towards the door.

She laughed silently. "Are ye afraid of Tim?"

He did not reply, but, making a sudden movement, he seized her around the body and pressed her to him. She did not resist, but began to laugh, and bared her teeth as she laughed. He tried to kiss her mouth, but she threw back her head and he kissed her cheek several times.

Then suddenly there was a hissing noise at the door. Carney sat up with a start. The tinker was standing in the entrance, stooping low, with his mouth open and his jaw twisted to the right, his two hands hanging loosely by his sides, with the fingers twitching. The dark-haired woman was standing behind him, peering over his shoulder. She was smiling.

Carney got to his feet, took a pace forward, and squared himself. He did not speak. The golden-haired woman uttered a loud peal of laughter and, stretching out her arms, she lay flat on the bed, giggling.

"Come out here," hissed the tinker.

He stepped back. Carney shouted and rushed at him, jumping the brazier. The tinker stepped aside and struck Carney a terrible blow on the jaw as he passed him. Carney staggered against the bank and fell in a heap. The tinker jumped on him like a cat,

striking him with his hands and feet all together. Carney roared: "Let me up, let me up. Fair play." But the tinker kept on beating him until at last he lay motionless at the bottom of the pit.

"Ha," said the tinker.

Then he picked up the prone body, as lightly as if it were an empty sack, and threw it to the top of the bank.

"Be off, you—" he hissed.

Carney struggled to his feet on the top of the bank and looked at the three of them. They were all standing now in front of the tent, the two women grinning, the tinker scowling. Then he staggered on to the road, with his hands to his head.

"Goodbye, dearie," cried the golden-haired one.

Then she screamed. Carney looked behind and saw the tinker carrying her into the tent in his arms.

"'Strewth!" cried Carney, crossing himself.

Then he trudged away fearfully through the storm towards Roundwood.

"'Strewth!" he cried at every two yards. "'Strewth!"



## RICHARD KELL

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### *IN THE BEGINNING*

God was the first poem ever uttered  
by innocent astonished lips, when doubt  
dropped like a pebble through the world's assurance,  
the image of Narcissus cracked and rippled.  
Then nothing was itself, always the hunters  
prowled through metaphor, felt it underfoot  
or brushing across their shoulders ; saw it burst  
above the jungle, slash the trees with rain,  
dispensing love and anger like a giant.

And every poem was a strange memento  
of the unending trek toward perfection  
(lying surely beyond the steaming ridges,  
the poisoned tracts of swamp). The eyes that once  
like emeralds caught the light of simple beauty  
were shaded now with terror, and the young  
smooth stems of thought crumpled and cut like thorn trees.  
And all day long among the voiceless flowers,  
the sunlight's tilted pillars, parrots gossiped,  
and screeched with laughter at the goggling idols.

# MICHAEL LUCEY

## CARNIVAL

### 1. *Hi-Diddle-Didle*

“**T**IS away above us,” Bennett interrupted. “Play something we can feel.”

But the fiddler ignored him. Strange music worried us on the castle. I blared the fiddler and saw that while the bow moved slowly, and this was most of the time, he looked sweetly sad; but when the bow flew, scorn, triumph, rage chased one another from his face within seconds.

“Beautiful!” sang Oona in a rush of music. Vacant-eyed, she stood nearest the fiddler, hushing talk with a floating hand.

The wild music reached a crescendo and faded sadly.

“He’s mad!” Bennett hoarsely.

The fiddler waved his instrument. Scorn darted from eyes set deep in the long head held high on a small body. He returned, “If you don’t understand my music you needn’t listen.”

“Hark at him.” Bennett moved heavily to within striking distance of the fiddler. “I don’t like your music, maestro.”

“Then go away.”

“I like that.” Bennett looked round at all us watchers. “Listen, beggar, you’re on our castle.”

The fiddler raised his instrument defensively.

Two huge hands sought the fiddle but the little man hid it behind his back. He tripped away, bringing the bow to the strings. And as we stared after him, listening, he danced off down the river road playing a merry tune we all knew. . . .

\* \* \*

*Boys and girls come out to play,*

*The moon is up like any day,*

Moll sang, entering and closing the door.

I ran to my cap.

“Where bound, sirrah?”

“The moon.”

“Nonsense. ’Tis bed time.”

But I opened the door and ran through pall gold. An eye above winked. I reached the castle before hearing, “Come down to bed.” Moll is so slow.

The moon looked everywhere. Even nooks that should now be black and frightening glittered in patches. But, not to lose time for play, I kept running.

Footsteps pattered behind mine. Enjoying the race I ran like the wind, making more sound but hearing none; then I stopped and the other panted level. Rosie.

I said, “No girls.”

“I came out to play.”

"Go back to bed." And away I flew, causing a breeze through the breathless night.

When I stopped at the yellow washed house pursuing treads had faded ; but Rosie knew where to come and soon waited beside me at the door.

In answer to my call Patsy appeared, a battered three-holed tin dish in one hand and a dessert spoon in the other.

I enquired, "What are we eating?"

"Music. I couldn't get a fiddle but this'll do."

So off we went up through the village, Patsy belting out of his dish something supposed to be a political tune. No crowd gathered but we didn't want one. When a little white dog ran after us from a doorway Patsy ordered, "Go home," but the dog joined us. We headed down the river road up by the tinkling stream through the river fields.

At the foot of an almost perpendicular field, where the path for some yards grew as wide as a road, Patsy changed his tune. We stopped and Rosie and I each had three guesses to name it.

Patsy looked triumphant. "All wrong," he smiled, and that tune remains a mystery.

"Look at the poor dumb beast," he said, indicating a cow who blared us stupidly from half in and half out of the bushes near the stream. "Leaving her out at this hour is cruelty."

I told him, "'Tis warm. And like us she likes the moon and fresh air."

The cow seemed not to know where she was. When the dog barked she wondered on without stirring. He ran round each hoof and at last brought forth a sleepy "Mooo!"

Rosie smiled, "Must be the cow that jumped over the moon."

We looked up. The face above smiled like a living one. A beam, I noticed, shot from a winking eye to the thickest part of the bushes. Curious, I walked over. And there, hidden by low leaves but for that beam, lay a fiddle.

The others, all except the cow, had joined me when I picked it up.

"Now," I breathed, "we can have real music."

"'Tis the fiddler's," said Rosie. "If he catches us he'll give us what for."

"Nonsense. He likes music and'll love to see us following in his footsteps."

"Come on then. *Hi-diddle-diddle.*"

The very tune in my head. Rosie did a tap dance and, full of music, I hurried the bow to the strings. But the sound was not that awaited. Puzzled, I let bow and fiddle hang, each from a hand.

"I can play it," Rosie blurted, snatching the instrument.

Her preparatory gestures were unhurried. Calmly she brought forth sound—jarring sound. And then imitated my dropping of the instrument.



Patsy had watched with superior patience. Now he rested dish and spoon at his feet, and, with a stiff parallel movement of hands, grasped fiddle and bow.

"It takes a fiddler," he said, and moved to make music even faster than I'd moved. But not only was his loud noise far worse, he believed it was music. No wonder the dog kept barking.

But I quietened Patsy with, "What's that in the fiddle?" I had heard a faint "Me-ow!"

Patsy examined the fiddle. He breathed, "I heard something." "Look!" from Rosie.

Sitting between the cow's forelegs was a black cat. She stared us unblinkingly, wearing the trace of a grin.

"We're all here now, Patsy," I teased. "Nothing to prevent you giving of your best."

The little dog bounded to the cat and they chased each other in and out of the dish and between everyone's legs or hooves. Rosie and I held waists and tapped toes, waiting uncritically. With the same gusto as when he tackled the dish, Patsy began. Whether it was *Hi-diddle-diddle*, the political tune or the mystery, we never knew; but all moved merrily to the noise—except the cow.

"Silence!"

Patsy let bow and fiddle hang, each from a hand. Rosie and I stood petrified, each with a foot in the air. Cat and dog scampered into one bush.

I was sure I had looked up the field while dancing and had seen it empty. Now, high in the centre, a man stood against a cheek of the moon.

"Sir. . . ." Patsy began faintly.

The man heard.

"Don't 'sir' me. You've violated the night," and the fiddler ran down to us. He seized the fiddle and his anger vanished. "I see my choice of the ideal spot is yours too."

"Yes. All the animals. . . ."

Patsy stared around but met only the cow's dreamy eyes.

"Maybe I can coax them out." And the fiddler twanged one strange note.

Nothing happened. I felt uneasy under the cow's eye and Patsy awkwardly knocked his boot against the dish. That startled the fiddler. He looked pained—but only for the duration of that brief dish-note. As he struck another of his own, cat and dog tumbled from the bush as lightly as if nothing had happened.

The fiddler said, "Now we're all here, we can begin. You dance and sing."

Three of us formed a hand-clasping circle and, as the music came racing, danced and sang:

*Hi-diddle-diddle, the cat and the fiddle,  
The cow jumped over the moon.  
The little dog laughed to see such sport*

*And the dish ran away with the spoon.*

We paused, pressing hands, radiant in golden light and fresh memory of music. And cat and dog sat near, muzzle to muzzle.

"Not bad at all. I've accompanied better song and dance but never enjoyed it more."

We really felt at home with him now. Patsy said, "I'd love to see that cow jump."

"Stranger things have happened," said the fiddler, "but that cow has made her jump."

We looked more respectfully at the cow.

The moon clouded and shadows flew by us. The fiddler turned away and played to shining gaps in the cloud. Patsy, picking up dish and spoon, ducked between the cow's legs. He ran from head to tail and back again, the fiddler following at his side. Each, regardless of bushes, waved the instrument of his music.

The moon reappeared, but the chase went on. All around the cow and round and round each hoof.

Not even this cow could stand it forever. She took one look at the now low moon and jumped. Only a small jump. Her hooves hardly rose above the lowest leaves. On returning to earth she turned, trampled over bushes and splashed across the brook.

Hunter and hunted peered at the scarcely visible cow as if she had performed a miracle; then hunted on without her.

Patsy hurled dish and spoon into different bushes and said, "Give us *Hi-diddle-diddle*."

"I will," said the fiddler.

But it was a new *Hi-diddle-diddle*. We could not sing to it but fancied animals mewling, barking, mooing, and laughter at a great banquet. The moon, lower still, seemed to laugh.

The fiddler eyed it and jumped up the field, still playing. Like a hare he ran up with his music and, panting, we hurried behind.

But the height was too much for five of us. We stood listening to enchanting music die and watching the fiddler stride madly over the hill with the moon.

## 2. *Smoke and Bubbles*

Nearly every bit of general fun I thought of as coming yearly like Christmas. Bonfire Night, Snap Apple Night, All Souls' Night for fearfulness; so when everyone blew bubbles on the *Pawl Bwee* I knew it was Bubble Night.

Down home and back up with my white pipe and soap and water. Over the castle wall Dovo watched the last of a red-faced sun, the top of its head.

He turned and stopped me with, "Where are yeh going with the pipe?"

"Up blowing bubbles."

"You're not," he doubted.

Dovo was a bit on the blind side, which might be what made him suspicious. He asked. "What have yeh in the 'bacca tin?"

I shoved it under his nose. He gave me a dirty look, smelt, then looked into the tin and believed.

"Where are yeh blowing?"

"We're all blowing. Follow me."

I never looked behind to see if he was following. In no time I had joined the bubble blowers.

There were eleven of us, all with white pipes. We had left the road and spread over the path and grass from the wall down to the top of the new steps. Bubbles, from the size of marbles to the size of tennis-balls, rose from the pipes. Many burst in the bowls as we blew cautiously, big-eyed. But the air seemed to us as full of spectrums as later the sky would be of stars. Every second a spectrum appeared, cheered by its breather, floated awhile as he wished it higher, then burst.

And we argued:

"I've made the biggest one yet."

"You didn't. I did."

"Mine went the highest."

"Lies. Look at mine in the clouds."

It would be hard to tell whose was the biggest or went the highest. They all burst anyway and we were all occupied filling the air. There was nearly a fight when two bubbles struck and vanished, but it would be silly to fight over that.

And then many of them were ending before their time. Furry, white fingers were floating to the attack. There was a breeze in the air and hundreds of dandelion fingers on the breeze.

I wondered, "Blow Dandelion Night! How did it get mixed up with Bubble Night?"

"Blow," urged Patsy. "Beat the furs."

And we all blew. There was only one host of them and soon what had not fallen to rest on the grass had floated on.

"We won," from Patsy. Though I thought the invaders would have gone anyway.

Patsy looked up to the wall with, "You're always bad luck . . ."

Dovo, a pipe between his teeth, watched us.

"Whenever I see you," from Patsy, "you're hanging over an ould wall."

Dovo removed his pipe with, "Whenever I see you you're underneath some blooming wall."

"How could you see me anywhere else when you're always over a bit of a wall?"

Old foolish talk. I was glad to see Dovo put his pipe back between his teeth and come down to us. Both grinned victoriously, Patsy feeling he had lured Dovo from a wall and Dovo showing he could exist away from a wall.

He studied us, standing near me on the grass. Smoke from



his pipe burst one or two bubbles, but there was not enough of it to outdo the dandelion fingers, nor did it rise as high as they had. A thin blue streak curled from his bowl and died far below the sky, and grey clouds from his mouth dissolved under specks poised above.

Between his teeth Dovo said to me, "You're blowing well. You've a good pipe."

"I have."

• "How much was it?"

"Fourpence."

"'Twas more than that."

Arguing with him was a waste of time.

I made another spectrum, a monster. It kept rising above the pursuing cloud from his mouth, hung awhile after the cloud was no more, then burst as Dovo said, "Bang!"

From him, "I used to blow bigger ones higher."

"You're swelling us," scoffed Patsy. "Bubble-buster."

"I'm telling ye——"

"Tell this bubble." And Patsy pointed to his latest, a flashing beauty that scaled up near where mine had.

"Bang!" cried Dovo, but the spectrum floated higher. "Bang, bang, bang, bang!" And then it burst.

"Give me yer pipe, Patsy, and I'll show ye a real bubble."

"Blow your own pipe," said Patsy.

Dovo turned to me but I wanted to keep on making bigger spectrums. Anyway, as he believed nothing I enjoyed disbelieving him now.

He boasted, "I've seen and made far bigger. Why can't I make them any more? I'm not going soft in the head. Now I know more and can make better."

We blew our pipes, paying no attention to him.

"I heard tell of a man—my brother. No, I'm telling the wrong story. This ould man got into the habit of blowing bubbles. He changed with a youngster briar and 'baeca for clay and soap and blew day and night. No one knows whether he made the biggest bubbles in the world. I'd say he did. But he went soft in the head. Indeed I'd say he was soft from the first bubble. Still, he lived a long time."

I turned to Dovo. His grumpy expression had vanished. Now his face looked much younger and, round, dreamy eyes, softer.

He said, "For the sake of days gone by I'll have one last blow."

The smoke was still ending odd spectrums. Dovo emptied sparks and ashes on the grass and stretched a hand for my tin of soap and water. I gave it to him.

There was something shy and superior about him as he poured a drop of soapy water into the bowl of his black pipe. Only a few watched him bring the stem near his lips and draw a deep breath.

From Patsy, "Oh, the big man blowing." Slowly, shyly look-

ing as if he knew all about it, Dovo exhaled through the stem. And the tops of several little heads shone and burst in his bowl.

He removed his pipe with, "No good. This is the wrong pipe for it."

"Spare fourpence," from Patsy.

"I will. No, them days is over for me. I'll let my pipe dry in the air."

He returned to the other side of the wall and laid his pipe on it.

As grumpy-looking as ever he kept 'banging' at high spectrums. When along flew another host of dandelion fingers, a denser host than the first, he laughed. They burst every spectrum as fast as we worked and he laughed himself to tears.

The host went away, falling. We blew harder than ever, arguing as before, and soon the air was full again of bubbles and our voices.

Dovo picked up his pipe and went away.

### 3. *Cat and Dog*

If the major hoped for a fight he was to be disappointed. If Miss Nolan feared a fight she needn't have looked so apprehensive.

He sat on one end of the bench, hands on stick, chin on hands, grinning; she, at the other end of the bench, appeared to be choking a scream.

Cats and dogs don't fight. The dog, shaking in anger at his master's feet, growled at the cat bristling on the middle of the bench. Miss Nolan glanced appealingly at the major, but he kept grinning patronisingly at his fox-terrier.

The dog sprang and chased the black-and-white cat round the bench once, then up a gap in the ditch and into the bushes. Cats, anyway frightened cats, run faster than dogs.

Both occupants of the bench turned their heads to the bushes.

In a minute the dog appeared. Only when he returned to his master's feet and lay wagging his tail, did Miss Nolan scream.

He gave his dog two more pats on the head, then turned to her, with, "There's nothing to be alarmed about, Miss Nolan."

Without looking at him she murmured, "I'm sorry."

"See, Oscar has no blood on him. Your cat's quite safe."

"That's a relief." She looked again into the bushes. Then glancing coyly at the major, "You've a nice dog."

He had begun to appear uneasy. Now he brightened with, "Thank you. We're the best of pals."

I picked up my overflowing bucket and started walking past them. She looked towards me but the major kept his eyes on her.

He said, "I'll get them to make friends, Oscar and . . ."

"Maeve."

"Yes. I'll make them pals if Maeve will appear."

Again they turned their heads to the bushes. I put down my bucket just beyond the bench. Though I intended to go on, imagining there was nothing now to watch, their lazy search for Maeve made me stop. The bushes would hide her, and anyway she was afraid of Oscar.

I went back and up the gap into the bushes. Thorns caught my hair, but I found Maeve sitting on a patch of dewy grass. She bristled and I whispered, "Puss, puss!" That soothed her. I lifted her with both arms and she sat proudly as I returned to the bench.

The sight of Oscar made her struggle. Then the major, looking happy, seized his dog, with, "Easy Oscar! Be pals." And Oscar looked pally.

Cat and dog were now only two feet apart, and quiet. The major said to Miss Nolan, "I'll release him, and you'll be surprised."

Dog, then cat, were released. They eyed each other calmly for some moments, then Oscar advanced and laid a playful paw on Maeve's neck. She shrugged it away.

The major radiated triumph. "There! Someone said to me this morning, 'Cats are cats and dogs, dogs', and I told the fool to talk sense."

Miss Nolan kept watching the pets.

Maeve sidled over to the bucket, put her forepaws on the low, large rim and drank. Oscar, after stopping for a pat from his master, trotted round the bucket, sniffing. He dashed under Maeve's belly, lifting her rear paws. She lost balance and fell into the water. Frantic, she scrambled back to earth, and stood, a forlorn sight, trying to banish water with convulsive shakes.

To the ring of his master's laughter Oscar scrambled into the bucket and as quickly scrambled out. He stood close to Maeve, moving his body in more frequent and brisker shakes.

Water flew from him on to Maeve.

She dashed to the pump and clawed her way up the handle to the summit, a point the sun was bathing. Sitting there, she regarded the three of us calmly.

#### 4. *The Big Wind Coming*

"Everything is changin'." Old Jonathan, passing on his donkey, to Jean. "And every wan is goin'," he called back to her.

But I thought him wrong. Every day was the same. And someone would go today, but tomorrow I might see his face again. As for myself, I gave up watching ships sail in and out (for none would ever take me) and waited for the big wind.

"When?" I asked, blinking at the moveless sun.

"Soon now," mother knitted on. "We'll have wind howlin' everywhere. God help these old houses."



"Will they be blown away?"

"Out into the ocean, I dread. What will you do?"

"Won't we have to go away then?"

"If we're here to go," she smiled.

And I feared it was all a joke. No big wind coming . . . . I nearly cried. Breathless air, blue sky and drowsy heat seemed here to stay. Nothing moved. That day was indeed long.

But winter came. I ran against winds, testing their strength, and was glad when they made me stop for breath quickly. I laughed at blown hats and huge trees bowing.

Under Long Quay trees Jean was sheltering from a little fiercely-blown rain. She shouted, "Winter is a curse!"

I went over to her and asked, "Will the wind get stronger?"

"A gale is predicted. God help all at sea."

"What about the houses?"

"Bless yeh, Dan, you've a home truth there. All I can say is: God save our houses an' all in them. For one, if I survive tonight I'm off to live with me sister in Cardiff. Anyway, there's nothin' here."

I smiled. Jean had been off to Cardiff for donkeys' years but hadn't stirred yet. With all her talk she was rooted to the village.

I told her, "We'll all be blown away." And hurried back to the wind.

I tried to whistle like it, but there is no imitating that mournful whistle. I walked against gusts of strengthening force, getting struck almost breathless; but after rounding the bend to the river road the force was behind, hurrying me up the hill.

I toured the houses that were to go. Some looked solid enough for a cyclone, but even the big black house on the castle had shed mortar from its gable-end in the sun. Down with me to the palace. From one discoloured roof a slate flew and crumbled at the water's edge.

The bank was more exposed. Here the long line of dwellings, between the blocks of which narrow paths began and wound steeply through the heart of the village, had in its midst one deserted abode. The walls were misshapen and dusty and glassless windows looked blankly at the sea. Below, a small boat twisted at its moorings.

Darkness was coming early. I turned up the path through the cabbage garden (where no cabbage was planted or grew), jumped over the 'dumpit', crossed the castle and so down home.

Mother was lighting the lamp. She exclaimed, "Ah, just as I'd it ready," and placed on my chest a red pullover. "Fits perfectly," she said, and began to knit the other half.

Moll, slowly descending the stairs, cried, "I was in dread you'd be blown into the ocean."

"Don't worry. 'Tis forecast we'll all be blown there tonight."

Moll was ever a herald of the wind. She mourned, "I can't

deny it. Merciful Mother, but we're in for a night!"

Mother baited her with, "The wind is risin'."

"'Tis, I say. If we don't get driven out into the ocean, we'll have the ocean in on top of us."

I sat back on a chair, listening. The wind keened for the damage it was doing.

Moll, after talking for an hour of people, dead and gone, and people soon to die, rose with, "I'll take my four bones to bed, though I won't sleep."

I meant to stay up all night. But when, after another hour, mother left me alone in the dark, I began to doze before a dying fire. The fierce gusts held for me no terror, so I could not keep my eyes open to see what would happen.

Up to bed with me. Lying comfortably in the deep dark I heard the walls make their stand against the ghost that is felt and heard. And I left them to it.

Morning did not bring disappointment. The hopes of yesterday only seemed unreal as I looked out at solid houses.

But out with me into pale sunshine and a kissing breeze. There was damage. Our water pipe had been twisted away from the barrel and there was a pond in the bit of garden. The palace was dotted with smashed or crumbled slates.

On the rocks off the bank Danno, unable to get out to his launch, picked up pieces of his wrecked, small boat.

He told me, "Old Jonathan died of fright last night."

Calmly I realised that this was about all our big wind could do.

"Look at it!" came a voice.

I turned from the sea to Jean. She was standing by her house and there was a great hole in the roof.

I ran over.

"Slates, slates," she uttered, trampling on them. "And look on the rocks. . . ."

I looked over the wall at the scattered slates. More were visible beneath the purifying tide.

"Blown into the sea!" she cried in my ear. "Well, that's hint enough for me. I'm off today!"

My laugh burst out.

But that day Jean auctioned her furniture and went to Cardiff.

## 5. *Dolly*

She kept a cat. And there were those who swore they saw him laughing while Dolly, funny-faced and mournful, chased him all over the house.

But that's a bit too much of it. Though I first met Dolly through Tom, the cat. Tom was sitting on his mistress's doorstep, a well-fed sight, and he grinned a "Me-oww!"

I stroked his broad back and he stood, purring.

"Tom!" came a sad voice.

Looking down was a funny fat face. But it wasn't just the face. Standing there on the doorstep was a woman the breadth of four. I'd missed seeing her come out and wanted to see her squeeze her way in.

She eyed me tearfully. I said, "I'm Dan."

"Are yeh? I'm Dolly."

And she looked so like the funniest of clowns that if I didn't force myself to think of something really sad I'd have gone off in stitches.

"This place is too quiet," she was saying.

"Tis." I stopped thinking of my lost ball. "There's seldom a circus!"

"Came here for the good o' me health; but I'm thinkin' of leavin' again. There's not a ——"

"What cheer, Dolly!"

Will, the bread man, holding two large loaves under her nose. "Eat it all up now and get fat." And he laughed loudly.

She was the picture of meek woe.

"You won't Dolly? Then starve. We'll see if thin Tom is as foolish. Tom, boy!"

He put the loaves down in front of the cat. Tom sniffed them and grinned at him "Me-oww!"

"Oh, the pair of ye is well matched. Cheerio!" and laughing again Wili went on his rounds.

I said, "He thinks he's funny."

Dolly was no laughing matter after all.

Said she, "Once upon a time I could joke with the best of them. An' I'd hopes. Ah, well. . . ."

"Of what?"

She looked from me to Tom. "Happy hopes. But I'm too fat. Well, I'll see yeh again, Dan."

She waved Tom inside. I'd have forgotten to watch her entrance but what she said kept my eyes glued. There was no squeezing through. A slow, revolving movement got her in nicely.

We'd both forgotten the loaves on the step. Then I spied a pair of big eyes on them and a pair of small hands lifting them up. A little stranger, much the worse for wear, stood holding them half way between his mouth and the door.

From off the step I had a side view of what might have been the statue of one of old offering up what he could ill afford.

Said I, "What's yer name?"

He looked at me, thin-faced. "I dunno."

"Where do you live?"

"I dunno."

And I could well believe he wasn't kidding. As lean and ragged as they come, he waited meekly on the door step.

God knows how long he'd have waited. He stood still even



when something happened—Tom jumped out the window and sniffed his bare toes suspiciously. This boy, it was plain, took no interest in cats.

“Tom!”

Dolly’s head and shoulders bending over the stranger.

Said he, “All right.”

“All right?” Dolly, her face six inches from his, stared mournfully.

I drew back, thinking of private hopes.

“All right,” the stranger explained, “if I’m Tom.”

“God save us, child! Come inside.”

She went to the door and drew him in.

Next day Dolly and he sat on the door step in the sun. And the cat went by me at a steady trot, as if bound for distant parts.

I asked, “Where’s he off to?”

“You’ll have to ask him,” laughed Dolly. And as she and Tom looked after the funnily-trotting cat they went off in stitches of laughter.

## DONAGH MacDONAGH

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### DEATH OF AN ANCESTOR

**T**ALL, weak and thin, Tom Mongan was probably the oldest man in Roscommon, maybe in Connacht. He had come out of Connemara in the Famine years with his son by his side, and though that was all of fifty years ago he showed no signs of dying. Not that he was ever a strong man, his cheeks had never filled again after those skeleton years, he was never warm, and when he lay on the straw paliasse in the corner, or in the settle-bed, he might have been a heap of old rags; but over the years and over the decades he continued to breathe and wheeze, to eat as much as any and to mumble the poems of his lost and barren country.

His son, John, had married in Roscommon and he and the wife, their four sons and daughter all lived in the little two-roomed cabin, a kitchen and what they called a bedroom. There was no chimney in the kitchen and the smoke stumbled and lurched about it before it found its way through the hole in the roof, so that there wasn't a member of the Mongan family but had red-rimmed eyes and a choked breath. There wasn't one of them for that matter who had ever had a full stomach of good food.

They were not happy people, but they were not unhappy either, since they had no standard of happiness. The priest told them they were wicked and warned them against the seven deadly sins, and they were willing to believe that they were guilty of the sins of pride and gluttony and sloth, as well as of lust, anger, covetousness and envy.

They broke the land, drained it, manured it, tilled and reaped, watched potato bloom for the nauseous blight, cut, footed and saved turf, drank goat's milk and at Christmas sometimes had meat for dinner. Among the neighbours they could keep their pride, the rent was paid and the dues, but at Mulhern's where they could never overtake their shop-bills they had neither pride nor dignity.

Their landlord was an absentee who lived in London, but he was not the worst, and his agent, a red-headed Scotsman called MacDonald, was just if he was hard; he had been known to extend credit for the rent for as much as three months, and he had instructions to keep up the old funeral tradition.

By this tradition a pound was given to every tenant to bury his dead, to buy a coffin that he might not suffer the shame of sending his dead naked into the earth. It was an old tradition and it was a good tradition, since it was never necessary to lay out the pound on the coffin, the family and the neighbours combining to knock one together.

For a long time now the Mongans had been thinking of that pound. They knew old Tom would not grudge it to them, and as they heard his thin and penetrating voice from the middle of the turf smoke they thought half resentfully of the children going barefoot in winter. They thought too of American bacon and of shop bread, and John sometimes found himself reflecting on the luxury of a half barrel of porter at a wake.

At last the old man took to his bed. It was years since he had seen the light of day. He had been content enough to sit on a little creepy stool over the smouldering fire crooning and mumbling to himself, but now he lay all day long in the settle bed, and at night the children who had to share it with him complained that he never slept, that he murmured in Irish of the sea and the boats and the clean and shining fish of Connemara.

He seldom slept in the day either, but lay on his back, slack and dry as a potato skin, with his eyes open, staring at the roof that was brown and viscid with turf smoke, and Mary, his daughter-in-law, would hear him as she went about the kitchen. "Oh, the times that were in it," he would say, "Sean Naughton my jewel what happened to you at all to be caught by death, you that were light in a curragh. And you Miles Thornton, lying in a ditch with your eyes open and the nettle juice green on your mouth. What way at all is it for me to be alive and Joseph Connacannon that was the choice of the women of Connacht lying in his empty cottage and not one woman's hand to close his eyes. I ask you God to stop me remembering and remembering." And Mary would say, "The daddo is wandering again," as she counted the potatoes.

The day came when he no longer murmured and when there were few potatoes left in the clamp, and no food at all in the house. The old man lay there, his nose pointed and thin, his breath a whisper it was hard to hear. They lifted him up, and it was not difficult, and they brought him into the bedroom in case he might die in the night in the settle, lying among the children. The light was gone out of his eyes, and when they put a little water in his mouth it trickled again down his chin.

"He'll not last the night," said John, "the old man is finished after all his wanderings."

"He'll surely not last the night," said Mary, as she knelt beside him, "so let you be sending for the priest and preparing his coffin."

The priest could get no answer from old Tom. He gave him absolution anyway and said, "It'll not be long now. 'Tis a wonder the way he lasted so long after all he went through."

When he went Mary said again, "It's time you were preparing his coffin," and this time John took her meaning.

Mr. MacDonald was in his office when John came to him. He had come out of Scotland twenty years before, poor and ambitious, with the hope of finding in Ireland the fortune which Scotland



could not give. He had not found it. His salary as land agent was reasonable but not remarkable and being honest he did not cheat either the tenants or his employer. He had never mixed with the people among whom he lived and had no desire to do so. He suspected the Irish of eternal intrigue against his employer and the king of England. A kindly man, he had never opened his heart to the bleak air of Connacht.

As John stood at the door of the office turning his cap over and over in his hands Mr. MacDonald said in the clipped English which he affected to disguise his native accent, "Come in Mongan. What's your trouble?"

"It's the old man, Mr. MacDonald," John said. "He's gone at last, God be good to him."

"Sorry to hear that Mongan," said Mr. MacDonald. "Fine old chap. Always on time with the rent. Good type. When did it happen?"

"Just now, sir. Just this very minute. The priest was with him at the end. He had a lovely death. We'll be burying him to-morrow. If we have the coffin that is."

"Oh yes, the coffin. Let me see. A pound isn't it?"

"Ah, don't worry at all Mr. MacDonald. Sure it'll be all right any time it suits yourself. I thought you might like to know about the old man going, like."

"Nonsense, Mongan. A pound." He opened the desk before him, took out a little black box and from it took a sovereign. Then he stood up and came towards John, his whip-cord riding breeches murmuring as he moved. "Glad to be of help. If there is anything I can do let me know. I'll be at the funeral anyway." Death was the only social event which brought him close to the people.

"Ah, you're too good, Mr. MacDonald," John took the sovereign uneagerly. "I wouldn't have troubled you only. . . ."

"No trouble at all Mongan. Glad to be of help. Fine old man, old Tom."

Mumbling his thanks, half saluting and half bowing, John backed out of the room, and Mr. MacDonald closed the door after him and shrugged.

Five shillings of the pound went on food. There was American bacon and shop bread, there was tea and there was even a little butter. In the evening the family sat or stood, most of them stood, about the rough kitchen table. They were feeling a little ill after the unusual feast, and their reactions were slow when they heard a knock at the door. The knock was repeated, and then Mary, a rushlight in her hand, went to open the door. Mr. MacDonald stood there in his riding-breeches, a short whip in his hand.

"God save all here," he said, after the custom of the country.

"God save you kindly," they said. They were too surprised and terrified to say more. Mr. MacDonald had never been known to visit a house of death. He saw the surprise but not the terror.

"I just called down to pay my last respects to the old man," he said, looking curiously about the dim and empty kitchen which he had expected to find lighted and crowded for the wake.

"You were too good sir," said John, giving a horrified glance at Mary.

"Too good entirely," said Mary. She gave a hasty wipe to one of the home-made chairs, "Sit down, won't you, sir."

"I've nothing to offer you, sir," said John. "Mr. Mulhern was to send up a sup of porter, but it never came."

Mr. MacDonald, blinking his eyes in the turf smoke, shook his head as he sat down. "Thanks very much. Wouldn't touch it anyway. Just dropped in for an instant. Like to see the old man for the last time. Great old friend of mine."

"Ah, 'tis very dark in there, sir," said Mary. "You wouldn't be able to see a thing."

"Have a match," said Mr. MacDonald. "Like to have a last look at the old man."

"It isn't clean at all," said John, "and, saving your presence, there's a bit of a smell."

Mr. MacDonald, to whom this was perfectly obvious, shook his stubborn Scottish head. "Will only be an instant," he said, making for the door. John stood before him. "I don't think you ought to go in there, sir. It might be catching."

"What nonsense is this?" said Mr. MacDonald, now becoming really suspicious, and pushing his way into the dank little room. He struck a match and looked about him. The whole floor seemed to be covered with rags and straw; if there was a window it must have been a considerable time since it was opened. Of the old man he could see no sign at all.

He took a bundle of four or five matches from his box then and struck them all together. In the glare of this light he at last discerned the gaunt head of the old man, the eyes closed, the mouth hanging open, a dribble of water or saliva on the chin. He was just about to go out again when the old man, still stubbornly alive, and troubled perhaps by the light on his eyelids, gave a faint and almost inaudible groan. Mr. MacDonald peered closer by the light of his matches and saw that for all the welcome prepared for it, death had not yet come to the cabin.

He swung round, threw the burnt-out matches at the feet of John and Mary, beat his riding-whip against his thigh and raced through the cabin door muttering, "Irish! Irish!"

"Oh God," said Mary, "we'll surely be thrown on the roadside."

\* \* \*

No wake was held, and that gave rise to comment. No help was invited in the making of the coffin, and that seemed queerer still, but when on the following day the word was sent round to the neighbours that the old man was dead and that the funeral would be held that evening, large numbers gathered, for he was

the old man whom they could all remember as long as they could remember anything. Mr. MacDonald did not come to the funeral.

The neighbours were all anxious to show their respect by volunteering to carry the coffin a bit of the way towards the cemetery, but John Mongan seemed unnaturally reluctant to accept their offers. He and three of his sons carried it most of the way, and the churchyard was already in sight when young Paddy, a slight lad of fourteen, stumbled and nearly fell. On that Mr. Mulhern, the shopkeeper, as the most substantial citizen in the little community, stepped forward and in spite of John's efforts to keep his son in his place, put his shoulder under the coffin.

In later years Mr. Mulhern was fond of telling of that heavy walk to old Tom Mongan's grave. He would be standing portly and prosperous, in the snug off his bar, his voice low and resonant for the private ear of an important customer.

"The coffin was light," he would say, "but what else could it be and the old man only skin and bone. John seemed to be in a terrible taking to get it to the grave, but the two young lads who were bringing up the rear weren't much more than skin and bone themselves, and though it was mid-December they were sweating, saving your presence, at every step. I felt there was something queer going on and when Father Daly met us at the churchyard John seemed more anxious to get the coffin out of sight than to listen to the prayers for the dead.

"At last, when the proper moment came, we lowered the coffin down into the grave. As we did my ear, quite naturally was close against the wood, and I wouldn't swear in a court of law," at this he would lower his voice almost to inaudibility, "I wouldn't swear, but I'm as certain as I am that I'm standing here that I heard a groan."



## PATRICK GALVIN

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### *THE BALLAD OF IRISH WRITERS*

I am an old dog with a blue eye  
And a black eye and a loaf of bread.  
I am a scraggy dog with a green tail  
And a milk-pail and a moon for a bed.

I know a holy land of soft rain  
With no pain, and grey round towers.  
I know the black stars by their Christian names  
And old Dames in Tara under pale green bowers.

There are seven windows in the first house  
And a small mouse with squinting eyes.  
There are fourteen cracks in Patrick's head  
A goat's head, and I hope he dies.

In Dublin there are twenty scribes  
With split sides and made-up feet,  
Twenty scribes with cockled heads  
With narrow beds and double sheet.

There are six windows in the second house  
And a mad grouse in the family tree.  
There are thirteen rabbits in Nannid's mouth,  
A large mouth where a horse might be.

In Cork there are but nineteen scribes  
With moonbanged brides and metal lungs,  
Nineteen scribes with dangling teeth  
And fields for beds, and seaweed tongues.

There are five windows in the third shack  
And a railway track with silkblue logs.  
There are singing lions in Lugh's nose  
A paper nose, and I hope he's bitten by dogs.

In Limerick there are eighteen Poets  
With cardboard coats and ding-dong chests,  
Eighteen Poets with linen cheeks —  
Ten plagues on top of all the pests!

There are four windows in the fourth shack  
And a screaming Hack with a witch's grin.  
There's a dancing bull in Deirdre's ear  
A long ear that a child might row a boat in.

In Galway there are seventeen Poets  
All goats, with arms three miles long,  
Seventeen Poets alive with flannel pants,  
Alone on Midnight's Mountain with their Norman song.

There are three windows in the fifth cabin  
And a terrible robin with a terrible spear.  
There's a hundred hounds in John Joe's wig  
A matted wig, and I hope they bite his wooden ear.

In Sligo there is nothing at all  
But a Goblin's hall and a Devil's itch  
And all the torments ever wrought  
Were brought and dumped there in a ditch.

There are two windows in the fourth cabin  
And a new Aladdin with legs too long.  
There's not a drop of blood in Riordan's veins  
Nobbly veins that a man might break his leg on.

In Belfast there are sixteen scribes  
With horse's hides and donkey's heads,  
Sixteen scribes with shark-like fins  
And manfaced snakes they keep in sheds.

There is one window in the last room  
And a mad groom with a slobeen wife.  
There's a bullfrog lost in Paudeen's throat  
A tiny throat, and I hope it's there for Life.

In Wicklow there are fifteen Hacks  
With long green backs and iron toes,  
Fifteen Hacks with bluemoon eyes  
And lustful dreams of all God knows!

There are no windows in the Irish Hall  
And a bucket of gall lies on the roof.  
There are wires and bars on the old dog's head  
A handsome head and always held aloof.

## IRISH WRITING

In Ireland we have all the scribes  
With split sides and made-up feet, cockled heads,  
Narrow beds and double sheet,  
Moonbanged brides, metal lungs, dangling teeth,  
Fields for beds, seaweed tongues,  
Cardboard coats, ding-dong chests, linen cheeks,  
Goats with arms three miles long,  
Flannel pants, horse's hides, donkey's heads,  
Shark-like fins, manfaced snakes, long green backs,  
Iron toes, lustful dreams and all God knows!

But I have my blue eye and my black eye upon them.  
May plagues galore, floods galore, avalanches and witch's winds  
Fall down everywhichways on top of them all.  
That'll please me, that will.



QUILLIGAN

**A**FTER someone had bought him his sixth drink, Quilligan began to observe himself. This occurrence was notable for two reasons ; one, he rarely managed to obtain so many free drinks all at once, and two, Quilligan was not given to introspection. In his completely sober moments, which he tried to make as few as possible, he never allowed himself to observe anything ; it hurt too much. There had been a time when he derived a certain inverted pleasure from nursing his misfortunes, but circumstances had blunted the pain's keen edge. Now, its probing merely nagged and nauseated.

He met his own glassy stare in the mirror behind the bar and managed to conquer an habitual urge to look away. Through the fog of tobacco smoke, made even thicker and heavier with the burden of cheap scents, he considered his reflection. He noted a pair of broad athlete's shoulders, in which muscle had inevitably **been replaced by fat** ; the short stubby hair of indeterminate colour from which the sheen of youth had faded ; the blunt nose, dull grey eyes and thick lips, which once gave him the animal handsomeness of an Aberdeen Angus, but were now puffed and sagging with middle age.

He looked at his uniform and was surprised to discover that for once he could look on it with interest as well as detachment. Usually he put it on in the morning, wore it all day, and doffed it at night, with the same reluctant patience with which he suffered the bunion on his left foot. The uniform would not have been too greatly out of place in the more garish type of music hall song and dance act. The jacket, cut on nautical lines, but without any regard for nautical nattiness, was made of dramatic red flannel. It had wide reverses with blue piping, a large breast pocket, which bore a monogrammed blue crest, and two rows of six brass buttons embossed with anchors.

His blue shirt had a convertible collar, which he now wore open, but which could be turned down and used to retain the flowing blue tie that was the one concession to formality allowed by those who clothed him. Although he could not see them, he was aware of the cream flannel pants which were supported around his bulging waist by a belt of plaited strips of red and blue leather. A pair of tight brown and white American sports shoes contained his aching feet and every now and then he lifted the left one to relieve the pressure on his beating bunion.

The theatrical jauntiness of Quilligan's uniform might have been passable in its proper surroundings, but no circumstances could justify the utter incongruity of the schoolboy skull cap that disgraced his greying head. It was small, peakless, made of red

velour, and from its exact centre sprouted a royal blue tassel of silver threads. If people had seen it on a pantalooned clown, they would have laughed; on Quilligan's head, however, it was something best ignored, like a dowager's belch.

All at once, his reflection was too much for Quilligan, for in one of those flashes of mental clarity that sometimes precede deeper intoxication, he understood how his job as an holiday camp attendant parodied all that he was paid to symbolise. He felt very tired and old as he turned his head away from the mirror.

At that moment someone began to pound the cigarette-scarred piano in the corner of the bar. The melody, if the piece had melody, could not pierce the steady, high-pitched buzz of voices, but the drumming bass found support. Feet began to tap, hands thumped on table tops, heads nodded. The conversational pitch rose as it fought the other voices that commenced to hum the tune. He knew the signs; the holiday campers would want to dance now and they would start on the slightest provocation.

Out of the corner of his practised eye, Quilligan saw the potential source of provocation beginning to gyrate at the end of the bar. It was a thin, bespectacled male specimen with knobby knees protruding from blue canvas shorts. This indefatigable vacationer had given Quilligan trouble already by his determination not only to suck the fruits of organised freedom dry, but also to chew the pips. Quilligan decided to forestall him by shouting with professional jocularity, "Now then, lads and lassies! Time! All off to bed! We'll be up again to-morrow morning bright and early!"

With a jerk of his head he signalled the barmaid to pull down the shutter. She managed this with some difficulty and to the accompaniment of loud protests. The owner of the knobby knees was determined to drain the day to its dregs, however. He hammered his fists on a table in time to the music and shouted in a voice that cracked with alcoholic excitement, "Conga! Conga! We'll all do the Conga!"

His shouts reached the pianist who, thus encouraged, thumped the piano with renewed fervour. The crowd took up the rhythm and shouted, "Conga! Conga! We'll all do the Conga!"

Quilligan moved away from the bar with the intention of quelling the incipient riot. Realising that it would be useless to try and make himself heard above the din, he raised his arms, palms open and forward, in a mute appeal for order. This was his mistake. Whether his gesture was wilfully misinterpreted or not, Quilligan never knew, but someone it might have been the short-sighted man—caught one of his extended arms and whirled him round. Before he could do anything to prevent it, someone else placed a pair of hands on his hips and willy-nilly propelled him forward. In a few seconds a long line of shouting, stamping, people had formed themselves into a serpentine chain behind him. The line, with the reluctant Quilligan at its head, shuffled forward,

knocking chairs and tables aside. The noise was incredible.

Ignoring exhortations to lead the procession, Quilligan tried to steer a straight course across the room towards the door, and almost succeeded. Somewhere near the centre, however, his immediate follower divined his intention and suddenly swung him to one side. Quilligan half anticipated the move and tried to counteract it, but in throwing his weight in the opposite direction, his foot slipped in a pool of stout and he fell in a heap. Impelled by the efforts of those farther behind, the next six people fell over him. The music and the dance stopped abruptly, not because of the accident, but because of the hysterical mirth that suddenly mushroomed over the prostrate Quilligan.

If anyone else in the room but he had fallen, there would have been laughter, but his original reluctance to take part in the dance and the spectacle he now presented, sent the boisterous crowd into paroxysms of laughter. People staggered against the walls in exaggerated postures; others collapsed in nearby chairs holding their sides; and the half dozen who had fallen made no effort to rise but lay across him squirming with laughter.

Quilligan heard little of the gales of mirth that swept the room. He was conscious only of one thing, the excruciating pain of his doubled up leg and the weight of the six bodies that pinioned it. Gasping with pain and exertion, he tried to shake off his burden. He managed to heave himself up on one knee and his red face bore a momentary grimace of relief. Almost immediately, his calf and thigh muscles constricted in a vice-like cramp. Involuntarily he cried out in agony. His bellow whipped up a fresh wave of mirth.

Then a new sensation entered his pain-sharpened mind. It was a mixture of blind rage and self-pity; rage that made him want to rush round the room, fists flailing into those inane faces; self-pity that bit deep into the quick of his all but atrophied pride. Anger, the more primitive and stronger interest, won. He struggled up and made a wild swing at the nearest grinning mask, but for the second time that night, his foot slipped in the pool of stout and he fell. This time he sprawled on his face.

Even then, some sort of unthinking pity might have moved the nearest onlookers to help him to his feet, but in falling, his red velour skull cap slipped off his head, revealing the bald patch it covered. It was as if a clown had perpetrated a climactic joke. For a moment, a new intensity of mirth silenced the crowd. Then, their laughter gushed out in shrieking hysteria.

The sound beat Quilligan to the ground. It roared in his ears and seemed to fill his very lungs to bursting point. Strange convulsions shook his body and a prickling sensation made his eyes water. It took him a full five seconds lying there on the floor to realise that he was on the verge of crying. Then a final emotion gripped him; fear. Fear of hearing the new and infinitely more terrible laughter that the sight his tears would evoke.



When he stood up the second time there was a spatter of stout on his cheek and a wide set smile on his face. He almost strutted as he went over to the pianist, shouting, "Come on! Give us Boomps-a-daisy! Hands, knees and Boomps-a-daisy!"

## WINIFRED LETTS

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### YOUNG DAYS AT THE ABBEY THEATRE

A FEW months ago I was reading *Lady Gregory's Journals* edited by Lennox Robinson. How does one translate nostalgia into common speech? The petty press has debased 'glamour' and there seems no word for the wistful happiness that comes with old memories. They came flooding back as I read the book.

I was young again; I was rocking on the top of the old Dublin-Dalkey tram; I was going to the Abbey theatre. I cannot now recall how or why I went there first, because we were by the tradition of that day people who went to the Gaiety, people who would never miss a Shakespeare revival, or fail to see *Trelawney of the Wells*, or, in lighter mood, *Charlie's Aunt*. No, I cannot think why I decided on the Abbey; perhaps it was because I could then get a seat for sixpence, a convenient sum in youth.

I forget the details of the day, only remembering that the play was *Riders to the Sea*, that Sarah Allgood was the mother and William Fay the son, that Maire O'Neill and Brigid Fay were the two daughters.

This was not a play, it was life: it was the eternal battle of man with the sea, the sea as they know it in the western coast, not our polite sea that let us bathe so safely at Blackrock Baths. This was tragedy as the Greeks knew it. I cannot remember any applause, only that hush which falls on supreme art. The small audience (how woefully small in those days) had a discretion, a sense of tragedy, that purges through pity and through fear.

Gradually I came back to the normal day. There was Lady Gregory in the stalls, wearing her black mantilla, with her William Yeats; I see him in a grey velvet coat—or do I dream that? I was already under the spell of the early Yeats, the lyrical Yeats of the 'Celtic Twilight' and the 'Secret Rose'. In dreeps of western rain and on a most treacherous bicycle I had followed his footsteps to Drumcliffe, to Lisadell and the Rosses, to the shores of Lough Gill and to Dromahaire. Now I looked at him with the loving awe that belongs to youth.

I went home, still dazed, still entranced, to the suburban placidity of Blackrock, (we always went back to a punctual supper). But the spell of Synge's speech and tragedy lay upon me. I was eager to write something in the same medium. Of course it was a poor little play, something that could be parodied and torn to pieces. I called it *The Eyes of the Blind*; it concerned a murder on a Wicklow bog. I must concede myself one dramatic moment when my blind beggar saw the ghost of the murdered man behind the murderer's chair. Frank Fay told me later that his own part as the blind man had meant something significant to him. To my

great surprise the play was accepted. It is only used here as a preface to the fact that I now had an entry to the world behind the stage, so entirely strange, awesome, exciting in the humdrum of suburban life.

The manager at that time was Iden Payne. I recall him as a rather harassed young man with pockets bulging with papers. Better I remember the two Fays, Frank and Willie. They looked then just as they do in their pictures by J. B. Yeats in the Dublin National Gallery. To see these people rehearsing my own play as I sat in the darkness of the auditorium was wonderful to me. No one else was in the least impressed but they were all kind and casual. On the first night there no shouts for author, no bouquets on the last night. Indeed my verdict came from an old woman in the pit. I sat behind her at the *matinée*, anxious to test reactions there. She wore a black bonnet with bugles and they shook as she turned to her companion: 'I don't think much of that' she said. But, woman of the bugles, you did get a thrill when the blind man saw the ghost, for the bugles were frozen for that moment.

What matter? The play was not the thing for me, but it had been the 'Open Sesame' to the regions behind the stage. I had shared Lady Gregory's big barmbrack in the Greenroom. I had learnt something of the ways of producers at rehearsals. It was so that I first saw Mona Limerick, an actress of a strange, exotic quality that fitted her perfectly to the part of the lovely, fated Deirdre.

It seemed like physical pain whenever the manager interrupted her during the rehearsal. He seemed as cruel as one who wakes a sleep-walker. To me she remains the ideal Deirdre, the lovely woman fated to the tragedy that she foresees. I lived through one of those theatrical moments, never blurred in memory, when I saw her as Deirdre seated opposite to Naisi at the chess-table, while doom gathers round them in the darkness outside the tent. 'Oh, eagle if you were to do this thing . . .' Never can I forget her there on the threshold of death. How can people say that Yeats was no dramatist?

I saw Mona Limerick as Nan in Masefield's play, but her quality was not English. Said one: 'She walks like a woman who walks on sand.' I would have prayed to see her as Lady Macbeth, a part to match her rare quality. Max Beerbohm had discerned it, but manager and Fate missed their chance.

I was now enriched by some inside knowledge of the Abbey theatre. I knew—what a joy that was—the two Fays and their families. Their charm was to be just the same off the stage as on it. What Yeats called the beautiful fantasy of William Fay's playing of the fool in *On Baile's Strand* seemed to follow him into daily life. I remember a drive with him to the Scalp. We were seated on an outside car. During that drive he described to me the detailed arrangement of the Universe. I remember that the



dwellers in the moon act only with a group-will, all moving alike—a perfectly trained chorus. "When we die we go to a White House and gain in knowledge"—it must be a happy white house now you are in it, William Fay.

Like all that group of Irishmen they charmed the bird from the bough with their talk, did the Fays.

By now they were welcome guests at our quiet home in Black-rock. My mother, who never went to a theatre, had the temperament, responsive and passionate, that discerned the quality of artists. She loved the Fays and they loved her. Indeed hers was a sharp criticism of another visitor: 'No, I can't like him. I had expected him to be like Willie Fay and he isn't.'

It was a family joke that we could not keep the table-talk away from *Hamlet* when Frank Fay was there. *Hamlet* was Frank's 'King Charles's head'. It was fun to try and field the ball of conversation away, but as I remember Frank always won. When I think of Frank Fay on the stage it is again in one of those moments that remain sharp and poignant in memory. He was the old man in Maeterlinck's *Interior*. He comes to a lighted window, where a family can be seen, happy in its security. The old man has been sent as the messenger of tragedy, for the daughter of the house has been drowned, and even now they are carrying back her body to this peaceful house. I never now see from the darkness some tranquil picture of home life through uncurtained window but I see Frank Fay waiting to tell his news and I hear his voice.

Memories of others in the wonderful companies at the Abbey I have in plenty. I see Kerrigan as the dead Naisi in Synge's version of the Deirdre legend. Mrs. Pat Campbell as Deirdre was lying across his chest. One wondered if the weight equalled the glory of the moment. So bitter is that play with the little human squabble that separates the lovers even in death that one can hardly bear it. I seem to see Synge, sitting there, dark, inscrutable as Fate. Of a poverty in the human spirit he was well aware, ruthlessly he dragged it before the footlights. *The Well of the Saints* was to prove his point; better, he says, be blind beggars living in a dream world of beauty and nobility than have seeing eyes to discern the ugliness of the actual. In those days I loved to follow his tracks in the Wicklow mountains, in Glenmalur and Glen Imaal where the 'shadow of the glen' falls coldly.

Of another in the company, Michael Dolan, I have many theatre memories, as schoolmaster, priest, or maybe as shopkeeper in a Shiel comedy. Always he was excellent, always so fitted to that team work that was so noteworthy in the Abbey. Later it was my good fortune to see him in the quintessence of all these parts—I saw him as Noah. It was the translation of the French play *Noé* by André Obey.

This was the first time I had realized Noah as a man and not the little painted wooden figure of our childhood's Noah's Ark.

But here was Noah the man, *the* man at the cross-roads of life, from whence the roads descended the mountain to strange lands where his sons would father the white and coloured races who would fight each other to this day. I saw Noah as someone super-human, tragic, contending with evils, the stupidities of the people he had saved so hardly from destruction. Even the animals had declared war upon him. Like every saviour he was faced with the question: 'Was it worth it?'

There he was on Ararat, with all the problems of the world before him. How perfectly Maureen Delaney filled her part as the kindly inadequate Mrs. Noah; how poignantly human is her search for her little cat and her lonesomeness for the neighbours who had filled her life before the Flood.

Was ever actress so beloved on or off the stage as Maureen Delaney? One can only think of Ellen Terry. It irks one to see Maureen in the parts she can, one admits, play so well where she is unlovable, evil. Her public counts her the embodiment of everything most humorous, most lovable, motherly, home-making in Irish life. Yet as I write I recall her face seen recently in a film where she was menacing, terrible; in short she is one of our great artists.

As I was recalling these old days, pen in hand, the news came over the Radio; 'The Abbey theatre was burned down last night, shortly after midnight . . .'

A better theatre may rise Phoenix-like from the ashes . . . oh yes, but we who have youth's memories of the old Abbey will cherish them good and bad. The great copper-framed mirrors on the walls, the intense discomfort of the seats in the Upper Circle to anyone tall—but what can you expect for half a crown? The O'Casey plays made me forget any discomfort. We shall never see Sara Allgood as Juno again, the perfect tribute to all the selfless, sainted charwomen of Dublin. We shall never see McCormick in every part that he made so noteworthy. What an artist he was, modest, selfless, a dreamer of dreams, always striving towards an achievement still beyond. He was a man who loved the sea, and there seems there a symbol of his power as an actor, sometimes a jolly beggar, often a king, terrible as in *Œdipus*, puerile as in *Joxer*, cruel, gay, tragic—his range was only cut short by death.

A Phoenix will arise from the ashes of the old Abbey, and younger audiences will feel the thrill and the wonder that we felt long ago—but for the old Abbey the old Irish prayer: 'God be with the days.'

## ROBERT GREACEN

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### WILLIAM ALLINGHAM

**W**ILLIAM ALLINGHAM (1824-1889) is an Ulsterman whose fame has been largely forgotten, though a handful of his poems still appear in the anthologies. Commenting on this, George Sampson remarks in *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*:

William Allingham has the fluency and ease of his compatriot Tom Moore.

Mr. Sampson with some justice places him among the pre-Raphaelites, grouping him with Coventry Patmore, F. T. Palgrave, Cory and Thomas Woolner, the sculptor. It is interesting, too, that this English literary historian says, not altogether accurately, to my mind:

Allingham, though he was born in Ireland and wrote Irish poems that became popular in Ireland itself, was not really an Irish poet . . . he had no marked feeling for Irish thought and speech.

It would be more true to say that Allingham, an Irishman of English ancestry—his family had been Elizabethan settlers in Co. Donegal—had an affection and sympathy for both Ireland and England that are quite exceptional in modern literature.

Allingham was born on March 19, 1824, in Ballyshannon. At this time his father, formerly a merchant, managed a local Bank. The father was a good businessman, reasonably well-to-do, according to Allingham's account "a short, active, black-haired man", with a turn for arithmetic, prudent yet generous, a member of the Church of Ireland who duly voted Tory at the County elections.

His mother, thin, pale and delicate died at an early age, leaving her son "to love her shadowy memory". The single, inherited quality which, in his memoir of childhood, Allingham emphasises was a certain sincerity—at times even naive or impolite—which all the members of the family had in common; "an aversion from every sort of double-dealing and deception." Hence in later life he found that this tendency, together with a certain shyness in admitting others to personal intimacy, often ran him into absurd situations. This tendency to undeceive people, the disposition to clear up misconceptions is, I believe, frequently found in Ulster people; and it is that quality which makes the average Ulsterman dependable if at times unobtrusive in personal relationships. The



shyness of Allingham's nature and the idealisation of his mother were perhaps jointly responsible for his early rebuffs in love—for women like to be respected but not set on pedestals—and for the delay in marriage until he was a man of fifty, solidly established in literature and with a civil service career behind him. Even as late as 1866 he could write in his diary:

Whence or when I know not.  
She will come at last,  
And with one look will pay me  
For all the lonely past.

An active child, Allingham tells how he was seldom if ever impressed by the mountains within daily sight or the great ocean only three miles distant; instead he was profoundly visited by the sense of wonder when he first saw a large tub of fresh water with its "clear olive depth and round wooden dipper swimming like a boat on it tremulous surface." A near-by wall and a heap of grey rocks, overgrown by moss and tangles of briars, were two other sights that reached out to the young imagination. And, indeed, the truly poetic mind is frequently jolted into motion by a commonplace building and not by a cathedral, by a slag-heap or a gasometer and not by a rose-garden. ("See there, gasometer rises!" as C. Day Lewis has written.)

Locally educated for a time, he was sent off for a year's misery at a boarding-school at Killeshandra, Co. Cavan; then at not quite fourteen years old, he became a clerk in the Ballyshannon branch of the Provincial Bank of which his father was manager. The effects of an eye accident in childhood and a later inflammation of an arm, requiring surgical treatment, disappointment at the abrupt ending of his education—partly due to his father's fear that he might not live long enough to provide adequately for his family—and uncongenial work combined to set up the need for compensatory interests. Lover of nature though he was, he quickly found delight and consolation in pursuing desultory literary studies.

In 1843, at the age of nineteen, he paid a first and exciting visit to London. On the way he had a look at Oxford of which he wrote:

I have seen no place to equal it, to please my taste. Old churches, colleges and halls at every step, and plenty of old houses with gables to the street and latticed windows.

At last he had come into direct touch with the English life of just over a century ago, the England of expansion and enterprise, but one in which traditional ways of life had not yet been destroyed by mechanisation. Having tasted freedom in this outer world—for a strange, delirious, inviting place England must have

been to the Ballyshannon youth—Allingham determined to throw off the shackles of bank-clerking and one day to make a place for himself in London literary life. That day was to come, years later, but in the meantime he had to look around for a new job. He was lucky enough to find, at the age of twenty-two, a post in Her Majesty's Customs.

Belfast, then as now, was hardly a substitute for the hurly-burly of London, but it was a bit nearer the magnetic city than the sleepy town of Ballyshannon. In 1846 Allingham arrived in Belfast for instruction in the duties of Principal Coast Officer of Customs—"a tolerably well-sounding title, but which carried with it a salary of but £80 a year." He put up in a Temperance Hotel in Waring Street, slept soundly in that "narrow noisy thoroughfare" and daily trudged about the docks and timber yards, learning to measure logs and piles of planks, and to determine the tonnage of ships; at the office he learned the rudiments of Customs book-keeping, but found time to talk to the clerks about literature and poetry in a way that—can one be surprised?—"excited some astonishment". In 1846 the name of Tennyson caused no flutter in the hearts of the clerkly population of Belfast until the arrival of young Allingham; and, as the rest of the world ought to know by now, a writer cannot be said to be established until the clerks of the Northern Athens decide that he may pass. The important point, however, is that the Belfast sojourn decided Allingham's future career for, from then until 1870 he remained a civil servant, but for one brief attempt to live in London on his literary earnings.

In the summer of 1847 Allingham visited London: he went to the Princess's Theatre to see Macready in "Macbeth" but was somewhat disappointed by his performance; Jenny Lind at Her Majesty's was more to his liking—he cries out in the anguish of actress-love "she is too good for the stage." But these were mere curtain-raisers to the evening of June 27 when at last, after the leaving of cards and the writing of notes, he found himself inside 32 Edwardes Square in Kensington. To quote his own words:

The door opened and in came the Genius Loci, a tallish young old man, in dark dressing-gown and wide turned down shirt-collar, his copious iron-gray hair falling almost to his shoulders.

The host was Leigh Hunt to whom a first book of verse was to be dedicated in 1850, and to whose *Journal* he had already contributed. This was Allingham's first important literary friendship; and it is a tribute to his modesty and good sense that his many future friendships—with Browning, Tennyson, Carlyle and other Victorian giants, as well as with more humble people—were friendships that endured. Friendship, and the interplay of stimulating and original minds were essential to Allingham's nature, for his was a mind essentially *receptive* rather than creative in

any large sense.

Allingham could measure ships, could hold his own in literary and artistic conversation with the best minds of Victorian England and could brood (like Tennyson) on the problems of human desunity. In Auden's contemporary words he could "sing of human unsuccess/In a rapture of distress". In short, he was a poet above all else, and he had that blend of intuition, sensibility and reflective alone-ness out of which poetry is created. He had his flashes that lighted a way for him out of the gloom and isolation broken into only by work and social contacts. If his poetry never touched greatness it was because of the defect of his qualities; the reliability and caution and fear of soaring too high—above his literary station, so to say.

Most readers in Ireland will readily bring to mind *The Winding Banks of Erne* with its evocation of sights and sounds in Allingham's native place.

Adieu to Ballyshannon! where I was bred and born;  
Go where I may, I'll think of you, as sure as night and morn.  
The kindly spot, the friendly town, where everyone is known.  
And not a face in all the place but partly seems my own.

His best lyrics are the directly descriptive, drawn quickly and vividly from nature; the less successful are those that tell of saddest thought, but which lack the luminosity of really fine reflective poetry.

The most interesting of his narrative poems is perhaps *George Levison, or The Schoolfellows*, with its English village setting and beginning:

The noisy sparrows in our clematis  
Chatted of rain, a pensive summer dusk  
Shading the little lawn and garden-ground  
Between our threshold and the village-street;  
With one pure star, a lonely altar-lamp  
In twilight's vast cathedral.

Here, one feels, is a poem arising directly from his own observation—the betrayal of early promise, based, one imagines, on someone he had known intimately. Too many of his other narrative poems seem to be wearisome echoes of Tennyson; *Southwell Park*, for example, with its queenly bride and "terraces of emerald sward", in which the characters are artificial and the diction contrived.

*Laurence Bloomfield*, published in 1864, is a long poem in heroic couplets and shows the influence of Goldsmith and Crabbe. This poem, regarded by Allingham as his most important work, failed to impress the literary public, although it pleased some contemporary critics, and moved Turgenev to say, after reading

it. "I never understood Ireland before." The poem deals with the attempt of the chief character, Bloomfield—a young Irish landlord, who returns to his estate after an English education—to raise the social and cultural level of his tenantry. Richard Garnett in *The Dictionary of National Biography* (1901) call it "the epic of Irish philosophic landlordism." Whether or not the poem succeeds as poetry (and most critics have agreed that it does not) it testifies to Allingham's life-long interest and concern for "poor Paddy" whom he defended against Tennyson's outbursts of indignant contempt.

Noting, in 1867, that Tennyson was unhappy because of his "uncertainty regarding the condition of man"—so early had our bitter modern *malaise* set in—Allingham goes on to make a statement that throws some light on his own poetic practice:—

The poet has only the same materials of sensation and thought as ordinary mortals; he uses them better; but to step outside the human limitations is not granted even to him. The secret is kept from one and all of us. We must turn eyes and thoughts to the finer and nobler aspects of things, and never let the scalpel of Science overbear pen, pencil and plectrum. A Poet's doubts and anxieties are more comforting than a scientist's certainties and equanimities.

Yet the effort to know the final certainties is part of the poet's struggle: to know what he knows he cannot know. Allingham, too, tried to find the philosopher's stone.

In this attempt to fashion a coherent philosophy of life Allingham turned to the artistic and intellectual leaders of the time. In 1850 he had sent his first volume of poems to Tennyson; he did not have a reply, but got to know indirectly that Tennyson "thought well of it". A year later, through Coventry Patmore, he learned that a visit to the older poet would be welcomed. Tennyson, at forty-one, was tall, swarthy, slightly stooping, carelessly dressed, and when Allingham called at his Twickenham house was suffering from hay-fever, an affliction from which poets are by no means free. Allingham listened while Tennyson criticised (and praised) his poems, reading out some of them, admiring especially the lines:

Night with her cold fingers  
Sprinkles moonbeams on the dim sea-waste

To the remark, "That was Donegal Bay", Tennyson replied "I knew you took it from nature." Whatever his other faults, Allingham seldom wrote at second-hand.

That visit was a success, and the two poets walked together to Richmond Station, Allingham feeling as though he had been



"familiar for years with this great and simple man." A long friendship thus began. Years later, when Allingham was working in Hampshire and Tennyson living in the near-by Isle of Wight, the two writers frequently ate together and went off on country excursions. One has the impression that Tennyson, a dogmatic and more "highly-charged" person, always remained the Master to the younger man; but one cannot doubt Tennyson's high opinion of Allingham's integrity as man and poet, and his regard for the Ulsterman's judgment, even when he swept it aside with a show of petulance. Allingham records:

After dinner we talk of dreams. T. said "In my boyhood I had *intuitions* of Immortality—inexpressible! I have never been able to express them. I shall try some day". I say that I too have felt something of that kind; whereat T. (being in one of his less amiable moods) growls, "I don't believe you have. You say it out of rivalry."

But on the whole Tennyson, despite his irascibility, emerges as a likeable enough person, serious and vigorous, and dedicated to his craft.

An early intimate had been Dante Gabriel Rossetti, but this friendship was one of the few that did not retain its early fire. Rossetti is sketched vividly for us in 1867, with his peculiar lounging gait, often trailing the point of his umbrella on the ground and humming a "*sotto voce* note of defiance to the Universe". Another of the literary giants with whom Allingham came into very close contact was Carlyle, with his granite-hewn opinions, both literary and political. (Browning once related to Allingham how Carlyle had counselled him to give up writing verse!) Carlyle's highly provocative statements—for instance, "Shakespeare and Cromwell were brothers, profoundly wise and sympathetic souls"—sometimes drew protest from Allingham, but for the most part he seems to have contented himself with simply recording the Scotsman's *dicta*. One of these is Carlyle's bitter rebuttal of materialist philosophy:

... an utterly contemptible theory, that out of dead blind dust could spring the sense of right and wrong! Fit only for a dog, if a dog could speculate.

In contrast, Allingham, on scientific matters, while not being prepared to believe that the scientist could come nearer to ultimate truth than the poet, was prepared to listen to the opinions of trained minds.

Allingham had his share of recognition. In 1864 he was awarded, on Palmerston's recommendation, a Civil List pension of £60 a year which was increased to £100 in 1870; he won the friendship not only of literary men but of men of affairs; he was

quoted by Gladstone, during an Irish debate in the House of Commons. On his retirement from the Civil Service in 1870 he became assistant to J. A. Froude, editor of *Fraser's Magazine*, succeeding Froude as editor four years later. In this editorial post he was able to make use of his wide acquaintanceship with authors, publishing writers like Carlyle. A late marriage in 1870 to a lady who became known as a water-colourist brought him a domestic happiness that he had longed for since early manhood. On his death in 1889 he was cremated at Woking (by his wish) and at the cremation his own *Poet's Epitaph* was read, which sums up his thought:

Body to purifying flame,  
Soul to the Great Deep whence it came,  
Leaving a song on earth below,  
An urn of ashes white as snow.

The memory of William Allingham has not remained as green as it might, partly because, after all, he cannot be reckoned a major figure of his time, and partly because he never became the central personality in a movement or important controversy. His poetry is readable and at times memorable; and the diary, with its delightful fragments of an unfinished autobiography, is a mine of information and delight for those who are interested in lively day-to-day impressions of men, women and places, as seen by a shrewd observer over almost the whole second half of the nineteenth century.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### THE GLITTERING EYE

THE TRAGIC PHASE, A STUDY OF THE LAST POEMS OF  
W. B. YEATS, BY VIVIENNE KOCH, (*Routledge*, 10/6).

Chiefly my doubt was whether, on their own merits and apart from the bulk of Yeats's work, the *Last Poems* were great poetry at all. In her Foreword to this study of those she considers the most interesting and most difficult of them Vivienne Koch speaks of them as "these great but troubled poems", and elsewhere in her Introduction she holds it was the 'profound agony' of Yeats's conflict which is at once their source, energy and theme.

Now, the reproach most often levelled at modern poets is that their conflict (don't look now) shows up: which conflict either the poem should clearly resolve, but regrettably doesn't, or which should have been resolved before ever they put finger to typewriter. There is a modicum of justice in this, but yet it would seem that with these *Last Poems* of Yeats we are being asked to accept personal conflict itself, the action and description of turbulence, as constituting greatness; or at any rate to accept that it has been greatly expressed. It is true that a master craftsman could scarcely avoid turning the most wretched and shoddy material on his wheel, if that were all he had, until he gave it the best appearance he could: but it is also true the master craftsman would normally have the best material to hand, even of a mass produced fibre.

However: "the miracle of Yeats's and of all great art is that out of so personal a vision the artist can compel an assent to a problem which he is the first to pose in exactly those terms."

Now, an operative word here is *compel*. Yet: Bunyan, Milton, Blake—none of them seemed to put any compulsion on me to dream their dream or walk their waking world: but almost before I knew it I was going along with them, as, later, I was to go with J. Alfred Prufrock "when the evening was spread out against the sky". True, the Ancient Mariner's glittering eye *compelled* the Wedding Guest to hold from the wedding feast, but this device enables Coleridge to secure the background of human joy and fulfilment for which his Lay of terror and pity will purge us. Moreover, he has truly warned us in advance; and so, disarmed us. It is, in every way, a *fair cop*. For the glittering eye, while it compels us to stand, also re-assures us of our sanity as against its fearsome spell.

Aptly, Miss Koch prints as frontispiece that remark of T. S. Eliot's where he says that if we learn to read poetry properly, the poet never persuades us to believe anything; and underneath this, as if in cancellation or anyhow contradiction, this remark of Yeats:

"We only begin to live when we conceive life as tragedy". Those who have not found any 'conceiving' necessary; those, that is, for whom life has been, and is, tragedy, will find Yeats's remark superfluous, to say the least; others, again, may be stunned by the weightiness of its impact, and this, I take it, would have been the intention. At any rate, more than once Vivienne Koch emphasises that to persuade us to believe something was precisely what Yeats never ceased from doing in these poems. "The intensity of his lyricism is the function of its didactic urge". When we know this—she seems to say—we need not be persuaded by—or to—Yeats's 'persuasion', but only what it *feels* like to him.

I have what no young man can have  
Because he loves too much.  
Words I have that can pierce the heart,  
But what can he do but touch?

The lines are from *The Wild Old Wicked Man*, the first among the *Last Poems* Miss Koch takes for elucidation. Now, whether you are persuaded that no young man has words, (and I'm persuaded almost to the contrary) evidently 'the glittering eye' by which the wild old man would win the lady lies in his *words*. At least, he thinks so. Evidently, too, the lady for "the rest" of whose love the old man is somewhat arrogantly pleading (that is, for her body) is not persuaded, for she tells him her love is given to "the old man in the skies". At this point I found myself in the position of one for whom the subsequent proceedings had little interest, since the "old man in the skies" was identified in my mind with the old gentleman in the white nightshirt, and, as you might say, God knows who that is! However, the poem's theme—it is the theme of all these poems—is stated directly: 'All men live in suffering'. But the 'old man in the skies' can, and presumably does, "burn out" the suffering for the "right-taught man" who believes in him. For the others, including the wild old wicked man himself, who wants it that way, there is no solace except the solace which may temporarily, and temporally, be found "upon a woman's breast". The road thus is neither crooked nor straight, but circular, until "daybreak and a candle end".

The meaning is clear, but for me the spell here does not work; the 'glittering eye' of the words does not so much glitter as wink; and this, quite apart from the fact that special pleading never did appeal to me greatly, especially when the plea is entered on one's own behalf.

What does appeal to me is Miss Koch's method of elucidation of these poems; the chief things in which are, she tells us, first, "a willingness to let that particular poem take hold of the imagination as if it were—at the moment of scrutiny—the only poem in the world; second, to let only that poem and no other source—whether in poetry or in prose—determine, *in as far as is possible*,



what its meaning is". Miss Koch sounds like God's gift to minor poets, not alone major lions. However, she is aware hers is not the only, or even necessarily the best, critical method; she is doubtless aware also that what will serve with an old lion, or an old sheep, will not serve with a young dog, or a rabbit.

Even so, when we come to *The Statues*, we find her admitting the method will not work. *The Statues*, she says, is a superb poem which falls into the 'rich, dark' class; which, moreover, has not been discussed, for, "it presents a uniform front of obscurity which must prove irritating even to admirers of Yeats". Then she adds "Once the body of an artist's thought and work is known to the critic, it is impossible to assume a 'fictive' innocence, no matter how desirable innocence may be for independent and fresh responses". After that, let pedants and churls protest at the dredging she has to do in order to illumine the dredging of forty years which Yeats's mind brought up, and on which it fed, in process of shaping this poem. We learn, for instance, of its ending, that when Yeats wrote

We Irish, born into that ancient sect  
But thrown upon this filthy modern tide  
And by its formeless spawning fury wrecked,  
Climb to our proper dark, that we may trace  
The lineaments of a plummet measured face.

it was not submission to an inevitable historic process he had in mind, but a "laborious ascent to a previous condition of virtue", and certainly if so it would seem a noble journey we were being called upon to take. On the other hand, Miss Koch admits there is an 'ambivalence' about "sect", though, with much discernment, she concludes Yeats meant that the Irish were not only as of the lineage of Cuchulain, but also were heirs of the principles of 'calculation, number, measurement' of the Greeks.

When this is said, it is clear that Yeats is here separating the Irish of today from the world of today, that is, from the "formeless spawning fury" of the modern tide which, he says, has wrecked them. But by what "chicanery of time" may flesh and bone be separated? It is no more possible to separate the Irish of today from the world of today than it is to separate flesh from bone; at any rate, while the body lives; no more than it is possible to separate the form and texture of a poet's work, the poetry itself, from what he is actually saying or implying.

Yet in a way this is what Vivienne Koch tries to do, for in summing up her reading of *The Gyres* she comments: "We may not give anything for Yeats's backward looking solutions; that is not to the point. The experience of the poem has shaken us; and we are, in some measure, changed by our temporary submission to its tragic and desperate atmosphere. We have looked into the chasm".

Whether or not we give anything for Yeats's backward looking solutions, we cannot overlook that he offered them. But what must be to the point is that, not alone did he offer solutions, but he brought all the Yeatsian battery of persuasiveness to bear on us to make us believe his solutions *will happen*. As where, here in *The Gyres* we are told that "Those Old Rocky Face holds dear / Lovers of horses and women, shall . . . disinter the 'workman, noble and saint' / And all things run / On that unfashionable gyre again". If in all this there is inconstancy; if we "cannot safely assign any single belief even to a single poem"; then all I can say is that in this inconstancy there is something oddly consistent. And if we were *changed* by this note, we might wake up to find ourselves working for the restoration of feudal society; only of course, being changed we would not wake.

However, it is quite clear Yeats felt his prophetic note to be inadequate; and it almost seems as if, knowing this to be so, he was determined everything else should be made to be inadequate also. In this respect his reputed remark to John Sparrow on sexual experience, quoted by Miss Koch, is revealing: 'The tragedy of sexual intercourse is in the perpetual virginity of the soul'. There you have it. Or rather, there you haven't. For this is surely to put the matter right the wrong way round: widdershins, as Lawrence said. The theme is developed in the song sequence of *The Three Bushes*, and it can hardly be coincidence that the Chambermaid's Second Song, itself the expression of an unsatisfactory 'experience' which is not really true sexual experience at all, is placed last. Film fade-out.

'Inadequacy', in a different form, is the theme, too, of *An Acre of Grass*. Here, at his life's end, and calling the shades of Timon, Lear, the prophetic Blake, and Michael Angelo to mind, Yeats asks to be granted "an old man's frenzy", "an old man's eagle mind"; to be granted vision, vision, vision; vision meaning the visionary power he lacked; meaning the *seeing eye* that would match the 'glittering eye' of his words; which, lacking, he would be "forgotten else by mankind".

He need not have worried. Mankind may forget these last poems, but then were they not framed only *temporarily* to transcend the ordinary modes of existence, at any rate the tormented, sex-obsessed ones among them? But there is another Yeats, the Yeats of *The Rose Tree*, for instance, whose work does not seem to bear a rapid transit stamp. The 'leader' of the belated Irish Romantic Movement—the last in Europe—lived to become the foremost 'realist', meaning disillusioned romantic, in Europe. The synthesis between romanticism and 'realism' was, and is, left to others.

*The Tragic Phase* is as courageous as well as a scholarly book. In illuminating some of the more difficult of *The Last Poems* Vivienne Koch illuminates the sex-obsessed aspect of Yeats's later years—with a glance, too, at his sex-starved earlier years—about

which his biographers have been discreetly casual or academic, and does it in all honesty and sincerity. The poems themselves are placed in Four Groups, but with each poem printed facing its elucidation, so there can be absolutely no confusion for the student. That she succeeds in making them more readily accessible, both to readers of Yeats and to those who read poetry but do not know *The Last Poems*, there can be no doubt. That she has added much to their stature, is perhaps more doubtful. The book is written in a lively American style, which I personally find attractive, though I could wish Miss Koch would not use words like 'instinctual'. What's wrong with instinctive, anyway? She tells us the book is part of a study of Modern Poetry she is making, and that is something to watch for. The book is beautifully brought out.

EWART MILNE.

### FOLKLORE INTO SCIENCE

ULSTER FOLKLORE, BY JEANNE COOPER FOSTER. (*H. R. Carter Publications, Belfast; 10/6*).

This collection of the traditional folklore of Ulster is both valuable and interesting. It is valuable, as all such collections nowadays, which salvage and record the ancient learning of the human race before it is swamped in the new synthetic lore of Superman and Clod McCloy, must be valuable.

Folklore 'embraces everything relating to the ancient observances and customs, to the notions, beliefs, traditions, superstitions and prejudices of the common people.' Being of the modern age and perhaps removed a little from the common people we tend somewhat to view all this with, at best, a tolerant amusement. We are rational beings. We have put away the things of the childhood of the race.

Yet, after all, are we so right? Is it not just possible that, in our superiority, we have overreached ourselves and fallen into the greater ignorance of the closed mind, so that the apparent triviality of all these old wives' tales, these credulities of the infancy of our race, lies more in our lack of understanding and real sympathy, than in the lore itself. Though our heads may be in the air our roots are in the past and every minute of our present living is nourished and activated from the past.

Folklore, distorted though much of it may be by localisation, has a strange persistence in time and a curious pervasion of space. It overleaps the artificial barriers of history, language, nationality and creed. It is, in its elements, as common to the human race as the possession of a nose.

To make use of one of its own adages—its own bits of concentrated wisdom—"There is never smoke without fire." Behind



what now appears as crazy fancy there may once have been a fact that so many, so widely spread in time and space, accepted it and, distorted though it may have become, yet it had its own vitality and, even deformed, lived on. Folklore may not be science as we think of science now, but both had common ancestry in the techniques of observation and the deduction of principles from the correlation of many instances.

Again and again in this collection of Ulster lore you will come across instances with this indication. In the chapter on Charms and Folk medicine, for instance, the fact is noted that both in Ulster and England—and incidentally in West Cork—there is the traditional use of a piece of mouldy bread to prevent the festering and suppurating of cuts. Today we have the 'miracle drug' penicillin, whose origin and use is almost identical. Tomorrow we may read in the papers of the marvellous discovery of an extract from spiders' webs for the clotting of blood. That, like the use of a mould, has been folklore, the lore of the common people throughout the world already for countless generations. It is worth remembering also that, according to 'folklore' Prometheus stole fire from Heaven concealed within a nut. We have lived through a time when a new kind of fire—atomic fire—was discovered, released or maybe too, stolen, according to one's point of view and the eventual verdict of history. And this fire too came from a nut. It came from the 'nucleus' of the atom. There doesn't seem to be much new under the sun and new knowledge is largely ancient wisdom—or folklore—written in longer words.

The particularly interesting thing about this collection of Ulster folklore is the Ulster aspect of it. Again and again you come across examples of the coming together again in the Ulster tradition of three variants, Irish, Scottish and English, of the same bit of lore. The lore has a greater vitality than history and is still sufficiently alive and flexible to adapt itself to local circumstances. Such collections as this may, if they can do no more for the time being, 'encyst' such knowledge till we recover our senses, so preserving our race heritage.

ERIC CROSS.

#### SALUTATION TO 5, BY SHANE LESLIE. (*Hollis & Carter, 10/6*).

E. M. Forster once said of one of his characters, Mrs. Vyse, that she was a nice woman but that London life had swamped her personality. She had had too many interesting experiences for her intellectual capacity. She had entertained to lunch 'too many grandchildren of famous men'.

Sir Shane Leslie's undoubted talents would, I think, have been better displayed on a smaller canvas with a more restricted palette. Of all his books I used to like *Doomsland* the best, because there his rather volatile fancy was focussed on a simple



familiar theme, an Irish neighbourhood. It rested like a peacock butterfly on a whitewashed wall, gorgeous and yet not too exotic. Against a flat, monotonous background his pleasant qualities showed up well, his chivalry, his independent outlook, his romantic loyalties. Nobody else could have written *Doomsland*.

In most of his other books he seems to me to have met the fate of Mrs. Vyse. A good firm cake, while it was still fresh, has been soured in sherry and custard and turned into a sickly trifle. You turn a page or two of *Salutation to 5* and come across creamy, cloying anecdotes about King Edward and M. Ritz. You never seem to be far out of ear-shot of those grandchildren. There is always a hint of posturing and pretension.

Tolstoi is the only one of the five, who could be called great. Sir Shane's account of a visit to him at Yasnaya Polyana has the nostalgic charm of a faded holiday photograph, 'Me beside the Monument, 1907'. Nothing new is said about this venerable, much-photographed, much-described Sehenswürdigkeit; it is the figure of the Irish pilgrim himself which attracts attention. I wish he could have told us more of his own thoughts at the time. Surely they must have been rebellious and unorthodox, not just inquisitive, if they brought the young Etonian so far to make the acquaintance of this ancient iconoclast? Did something happen to the pilgrim to cloud and confuse his judgment, so that he ceased to trust his own loves and hates and accepted fashionable substitutes?

Otherwise I find it hard to explain his essay on Edmund Warre, the headmaster of Eton, whom Sir Shane calls 'the God' of his Eton days and whom he would not wish otherwise. For he can only have accepted so alien a God from fear or fashion. He must and ought to have hated Warre, who was wooden headed and arrogant. 'Warre,' he says, 'was Matthew Arnold's Philistine . . . Against Culture, Belles Lettres or any of the Movements that moved ever so gently under the Victorian crust he was adamant.' He turned Eton into a 'wholly athletic and semi-military academy'. Under his reign 'any appreciation of literature left one despised and avoided'. 'I was dropped into a dark corner', says Sir Shane, and he relates how he had to escape to France to recover in part from his three years misery at Eton. With all this said, it is an odd spectacle to see Sir Shane gambolling and slaver-ing for twenty three pages round the great headmaster, like a spaniel which has been trodden on by a clumsy boot. Such retrospective masochism is more unwholesome than the straightforward kind, because even the perverted pleasure of being hurt is imagined after the event. It was not pleasant at the time. To be disloyal to one's own boyhood is a form of 'trahison des clercs' to which the English *littérateur* is oddly addicted. Irish writers do not usually succumb so readily.

The ending of this puzzling essay is oozier than anything in *Good-bye, Mr. Chips*. Sir Shane imagines that on the Last Day 'by a happy thought on the part of the Eternal' the last Eton Absence

will be read by Edmund Warre to the resurrected Etonians. Poor Sir Shane! I think it must have been at Eton that he first began to believe in Hell and Eternal Damnation.

Sir William Butler, Mark Sykes and Mrs. Fitzherbert, the three other subjects of this biographical collection, are pleasanter, if less 'powerful' personalities than Warre. Butler was chivalrous, Sykes was 'original' in a Foreign Office way, Mrs. Fitzherbert was importantly unfortunate. I think what attracted Sir Shane to them was a certain gentlemanly or ladylike obstreperousness. In their antics they were never undignified nor like Tolstoi carried intransigence to extremes. Butler was a pro-Boer and an Irish Nationalist but a loyal servant of the Queen. Sykes was a Zionist not because of any un-British excess of altruism, but because he thought the U.S.A. might be brought into the war by placating the American Jews. Mrs. Fitzherbert was a monarch's discarded wife, who put her servants into royal livery but refused to be a duchess. Their stories are told well by Sir Shane and were worth telling. His researches have plainly been careful and his judgments are usually charitable.

The book is rather carelessly written or printed. The heroes of *War and Peace* were not called Vezukhov and Volknyski, Tolstoi did not live at Ysnaya Polyana nor was his wife called Sonya Androvnova, nor was the hero of *Manon Lescaut* called de Grioux. There is a slip in a French gender and some odd words and phrases like 'glucubrations' and 'aboding shrine', and it is horrible to use 'ambition' as a verb. But these are small defects. In general Sir Shane writes easily and readably and this book will give pleasure to many.

HUBERT BUTLER.

THE IRISH PARLIAMENTARY PARTY: 1890-1910. By F. S. L. LYONS. (*Faber, 25/-*).

This book, which is the fourth in a valuable series of "Studies in Irish History", deals with the history of the Irish Parliamentary Party between the death of Parnell and the introduction of the third Home Rule Bill, and fills a definite hiatus in the chronicles of modern Ireland. During that period, despite the heroic efforts of his successors to preserve the Parnellite traditions, the Irish Party underwent vital changes not only in its relation to the two great English parties, but in its discipline, organisation, and relationship to the electors. Mr. Lyons traces clearly and fully the nature and extent of this transformation, basing his study not only on the various published works concerning the period, but also on the private papers of John Dillon, William O'Brien, J. F. X. O'Brien (the party treasurer) and Timothy Harrington, to which he had access. He has, however, overlooked the most valuable source of all, the private papers of John Redmond, now deposited

in University College, Cork, which contain a mine of information meticulously arranged by Redmond himself. Characteristically enough neither he nor Dillon published any justification of their policy.

The removal and subsequent death of Parnell, then in his prime, left the Irish Party like a ship without a captain. For ten years it drifted aimlessly while the mutineers quarrelled amongst themselves. Finally, in 1900, John Redmond, then leader of the small Parnellite minority, was elected Chairman largely because his opponents could not agree. He had a difficult and thankless task for the clash between the three principal anti-Parnellite leaders, who were as temperamental as *prima donnas*, had really not been resolved. The characters of these three men: William O'Brien, emotional, exuberant, eager and energetic; John Dillon, suspicious, sober, silent and secretive; and Tim Healy, impish, impatient, ingenious and irreverent; are the real key to the history of that period which Mr. Lyons in his dissection of the principles and issues on which they differed has either rejected or overlooked. Redmond, who was by nature, moderate, magnanimous and straightforward, was eventually driven, much against his will, to make his choice between them and it was perhaps natural that the reserved Dillon, who had originally opposed his leadership, became in the end his trusted friend and confidant. The dualism of the Party's policy and attitude in Parliament at that time was largely due to these personal factors. Finally, as Mr. Lyons points out, the Party became a party of middle-aged men, led by a small coterie of aging agitators who had lost touch with the coming generation, much as the leaders of Fianna Fail and Fine Gael are to-day. The party had, as he shows, no alternative but to support the Liberal Party who were alone prepared to sponsor Home Rule and for whom they had repudiated Parnell. It is the fate of most political parties to outlive their usefulness and the Irish Party proved no exception. Yet when all is said and done their epitaph (not quoted by Mr. Lyons) was spoken by their greatest adversary, Lord Balfour, in June 1922, when he said "I do not believe that in the whole history of our, or perhaps any other, Parliament there has ever been such a party for the strenuousness of its discipline, the extraordinary wealth of admirable speakers which it contained, some of them great masters of eloquence and admirable debaters, formidable from their knowledge of Parliamentary methods and the use to which they put that knowledge." Two other small criticisms of Mr. Lyons' book may be made. First, the footnotes are too often only extensions of the text, and second, it is irritating to find titles like 'Liberal' and 'Home Rule' printed without capitals. The book is nevertheless a credit to its writer and publisher and a valuable addition to Irish historical literature. It is to be hoped that a future volume will deal with the story of the third Home Rule Bill and the Party's decline and fall. It is perhaps symptomatic of the new Ireland that this



book should have been published, like its predecessors in the series, in London.

JOHN J. HORGAN.

THE POETRY OF EZRA POUND, BY HUGH KENNER. (*Faber*, 25/-).

This book of Hugh Kenner's falls into a rare category—the "Reviewer's Reward." Five, perhaps six, such books have come my way in the last fifteen years. The difficulty is to praise a book of this kind in such a way as to make the public (this means you) realise that here is something they must have:

Because it is about Ezra Pound's poetry, this book eschews both his personality and the externals of his biography . . . I have had to choose, and I have chosen rather to reveal the work than to present the man.

What Kenner has done is to present a skilfully annotated anthology of Pound, in order to shed some light on a complicated sequence of Poundian trains of thought. But, in doing this he creates a powerful portrait of Pound the thinker—the man. And what an important man is Ezra! He looms larger and larger through every page of this intensely interesting, closely-packed book. I believe that it would be hard to overestimate the effect that a closer study of Pound's thought and system of values might have upon the young writers and artists of this country:

Artists are the antennae of the race. They are the registering instruments, and if they falsify their reports there is no measure to the harm they do. If you saw a man selling defective thermometers to a hospital, you would consider him a particularly vile kind of cheat. (*Polite Essays*).

about literature:

. . it has to do with maintaining the very cleanliness of the tools, the health of the very matter of thought itself . . . when the *application of word to thing*\* goes rotten, i.e. becomes slushy and inexact, or excessive or bloated, the whole machinery of social and individual thought and order goes to pot. (*Polite Essays*).

When literature is not active; when the word is not *constantly striving towards precision*\*, the nation decays in the head. . .



about the Renaissance:

When *words cease to cling close to things\**  
kingdoms fall, empires wane and diminish.  
Rome went because it was no longer the fashion  
to hit the nail on the head. They desired ora-  
tors. . . .

When war broke out in 1870, Flaubert said: "If they had read my *Education Sentimentale*, this sort of thing wouldn't have happened."

As Pound's obsession with truth, clarity, and precision, emerges from page after page of this absorbing book, it becomes increasingly clear that a man of such intellectual and emotional integrity, equipped with a passion, a technique, and a scholarship so formidable, must have something vitally urgent to say, and that if it is necessary to learn his language in order to apprehend it—well, we shall have to learn it.

The components of Pound's poetic world—Homer, Cavalcanti, Dante, Confucius, Jefferson and the Adamses; distributive economics and the corporate states of the thirties; Flaubert and Chinese linguistics—appear . . . haphazard to a degree . . . nothing would more discourage a new reader than a list of the more important kinds of learning built into Dante's *Commedia*. But no one thinks it necessary to postpone Dante until he has worked through Averroes and solved in the abstract how Odysseus imprisoned in a horned flame can be brought into stereoscopic focus with a succession of commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard. It is enough to be satisfied that there is a nodal point at which the diversely collected rays meet and are brought under simultaneous control. Every great writer operates from some such node. It is the point—to change the metaphor—at which the local operation of words in lines and passages becomes continuous with the operation of passages in the main design, and of whole works in the poise and thrust of a lifetime's output.

That should suffice to show you into what able hands this difficult job of exposition has fallen, and with what easy mastery it proceeds . . . the slow opening of the gates to the grave rhythms of Pound's wisdom:

With usury has no man a good house  
made of stone, no paradise on his church wall

With usury the stone cutter is kept from his stone  
 the weaver is kept from his loom by usury  
 Wool does not come into market  
 the peasant does not eat his own grain  
 the girl's needle goes blunt in her hand  
 The looms are hushed one after another  
 ten thousand after ten thousand. . . .

\* Reviewer's italics.

CECIL FFRENCH-SALKELD.

## HARRY PRICE : THE BIOGRAPHY OF A GHOST HUNTER

BY PAUL TABORI. (*Athenaeum Press*, 15/-).

Most of us have had to listen with a show of credence to the earnest-eyed relation of ghostly experiences. We listen with politeness written all over our faces, knowing only too well that nothing angers the unlearned more than an attempt to filch from them the simple beliefs and terminology of their childhood. To suggest diffidently that his experience may bear a natural explanation, brings out all the venom in a man who thinks that he has had an encounter with a ghost, and survived it. "Am I not to believe the evidence of my own eyes?" Of course he's not, the fool! That was in effect what Harry Price said during a long lifetime devoted to psychical research, and so earned the hatred not only of fraudulent mediums and the whole credulous tribe of table-tappers, but of the very many who liked to think themselves distinguished by psychic experience. Mr. Paul Tabori is not a spiritualist nor was he ever active in psychical research, and he justly claims that his approach to Harry Price in this biography is an open one.

While Price emerges as a considerable showman, vain, brusquely egotistical and impatient of values other than his own, one cannot doubt his sincerity and truthfulness. This is very important, because when we listen to a strange story, we judge of its truth by our opinion of the reliability of the witness. How, for instance, are we laymen to know whether it was in fact a poltergeist which gave Professor Joad that blow on the nose which he "can feel to the present day"? He was in Harry Price's company on the occasion, the two of them exploring country where the worst might reasonably be expected to happen at any moment. But if the sceptical and intelligent Harry Price were to have given his considered opinion that it was in fact a poltergeist territory; then indeed, we would have tended to believe. That is Harry Price's value as a writer—he convinces us, and we accept his conclusions until someone else comes along to push back the curtain a little further. As an investigator he did immense work in exposing fraudulent mediums and the 'spirit photography' industry. He was always ready to investigate any abnormal happenings, from fire-walking, levitation and the Indian rope trick to the live burial of fakirs, and mongooses which conversed with their owners in the



Isle of Man. He was an expert photographer and conjurer, and had considerable engineering knowledge, which enabled him to do a great deal of ground work in inventing methods and instruments for the prevention and destruction of fake phenomena. Yet despite a lifetime of earnest and intelligent investigation, he died still uncertain whether anything he had ever witnessed, was in fact paranormal.

This book of Paul Tabori's is good and solid. There is an occasional paragraph that will amuse, though the humour in ghost stories is necessarily always the same, and may be summed up in the line: "The ghost came in one door, and I went out the other." Mr. Tabori of necessity draws on books by Harry Price, which the interested will have read already, but he does not take too much from them. He has plenty to say that is new. This is not an inspired book, but it is a highly competent piece of journalism, and it gives a very full picture of Harry Price's character, his methods and his achievement.

MERVYN WALL

GOETHE'S FAUST, translated by Louis MacNeice. (*Faber*, 15/-)

Goethe laboured, off and on, at his great play for the better part of a long life. Its first translator into English, John Anster an Irishman, spent some forty years on the job—receiving the approbation of the Master himself. And now, after a century or so, another Irishman has made a new and very different version in a little more than six months.

Translated literature has this advantage over the original—that it can be brought up to date whenever it is re-done; and Mr. MacNeice is very much mid-twentieth century—

"Oh your lips are cold as stone!  
And dumb!  
What has become  
Of your love?  
Who has robbed me of my own?"

gasps his Gretchen in her madness. Anster's Margaret, on the other hand, speaks with the more ample utterance of the Romantic Revival—

"Ah me! your lips are cold—are dumb—are dead!  
Where are my kisses, where? with whom have you left them?  
Where is my love? Who robbed me of my love?"

On the whole, the poignancy of the scene—the farewell between Faust and his mistress who lies condemned for the murder of their baby—the most poignant in the play, is more acceptable in Anster's version than in MacNeice's; for the twentieth century

does not take kindly to poignancy, whereas the nineteenth wallowed in it.

For the rest, and the rest is a very considerable quantity, Mr. MacNeice has turned out a lively and readable *tour de force*—the more remarkable in that he claims to have practically no German. His translation was made for broadcasting, and what is good for that ephemeral medium is not always so good when put more permanently into print. One may, in fact, think highly of Mr. MacNeice as a poet without expecting his apparently efficient rendering of Goethe's Faust to add anything to his poetic stature.

GEOFFREY TAYLOR.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

- LIAM O'FLAHERTY: Born on the Aran Islands, 1896. Has an international reputation as novelist and short-story writer.
- DONAGH MACDONAGH: Born 1912. Was a barrister, a broadcaster, and is now a District Court Judge. Is one of Ireland's leading poets and his verse-play, *Happy as Larry*, was produced in Ireland, England and America.
- SEAMUS DE FAOITE: Born Killarney, 1918. His stories have been published in Ireland, Britain and the U.S.A., and his plays have been produced in Dublin and by Radio Eireann and the B.B.C. A collection of his stories, under the name of Seamus White, is due to appear in America shortly.
- MICHAEL LUCEY: Born in Scilly, a village outside Kinsale, in 1926. Served in the Irish Army during the Emergency and is now with the British Army on the Rhine. His first stories were published by *Irish Writing* and he has since appeared in other magazines.
- RICHARD KELL: Born Co. Cork, 1927. Spent five years in India and then was educated in Belfast and Dublin. His poems have been published in many Irish and British periodicals.
- ROBERT GREACEN: Born Londonderry, 1920. Has contributed poetry and criticism to many Irish and British periodicals. and has edited many anthologies. Now lives in London where he has been Assistant Editor of *United Nation's News* for the past two years.
- PATRICK GALVIN: Born Cork, 1925. National School education. Served in Africa and the Middle East with the R.A.F. His first poems appeared in *Poetry Ireland* and since then his work has been published in many of the leading Irish and British periodicals.
- WINIFRED LETTS: Spent her early years in England except for summer holidays in Dublin. Returned to Ireland in her twenties and lived there till lately. The Irish part of her life is recollected in *Knockmaroon*, and her poetry volumes, *Songs from Leinster* and *More Songs from Leinster* are well-known. Has had plays produced by the Abbey and the Gate Theatres.
- DAVID HAYES: Born Dublin, 1919. Spent nine years as a railway audit clerk, broke away to join the Public Relations Department of a transport company, left that and is now Public Relations Officer of Aer Lingus. Has had many radio scripts produced by Radio Eireann, the B.B.C. and the N.B.C. of America, and his plays have been produced by amateur companies. The story in this issue is the first he has had published.

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NOTE.—Macmillan & Co., Ltd., St. Martin's Street, London, W.C.2., would be grateful if any readers who possess letters from the late James Stephens would send them to the above address for possible use in a memoir. They would be copied and returned undamaged in a short time. It would be helpful if the envelopes were marked J.S.